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# EUCLID'S FIRST PROPOSITION AND JOYCE'S WOMB WITH A VIEW

ROBERT GRIFFIN

As the only diagram in *Finnegans Wake* (11 : 2), the emended illustration of Euclid's first proposition has naturally invited and received considerable interpretive commentary. Motivated by the desire to get to the bottom of things, readings have pursued a narrow stratum of inquiry, knowingly excluding the diametrically opposed versions that usually present themselves in Joyce's text. Such readings have proven 'correct' within self-imposed limitations, yet in the process have reaffirmed the coexistence in the *Wake* of paired opposites, of seen and unseen. Most commentary has been reserved for the shadowy doubling of Euclid's inscribed triangle or especially for the intersecting circles which have inspired an inventory of conjectural shapes, from lassies in arm to a vicocyclometer of aeons. The almond-shaped space that emerges as a result of intersection—a secondary space of remainder—has received less attention although suggested comparison with the mystical *vesica piscis* of Christ can be provocative when taken to its mythological roots as a prism on the world.<sup>1</sup> I propose to trace those roots. For convenience, examples of symbolic geometry are adduced from the two most influential myth families in western culture, Semitic and Indo-Aryan.

From Plato's geometrical relations as properties of ideal objects to Kant's synthetic a priori, the western tradition of philosophical rationalism had insisted that all knowledge should be constructed after the pattern of geometry. This was to privilege Euclid whose initial assumptions, derived by purely deductive method, were supposedly unquestionable—until the mid-19th century when non-Euclidean geometry began to reveal that space is not a form of order by which the human observer constructs his world. What a philosopher-mathematician may regard as a law of reason is actually a conditioning of imagination by the physical structure of environment ; the power of reason stems from and inheres in the ability to free the mind from rules established through experience and tradition : "you must, in undivided reawlity draw the line somewhawre." From Euclid's purveyor John Dee (*FW* 229 : 21) to the neo-Kantian conventionalism of Henri Poincaré and Einsteinian relativity—in which the natural geometry of space in astronomic dimensions is non-Euclidean (*FW* 293 : 4 ; 304 : 25)—the context of the *Wake* shakes loose the accretions of presumed Euclidean certainty. It restores the considerable debt

of Euclidean geometry to the Pythagorean mysticism of numbers and to Platonic metaphysics (see “Joyclid”’s Platonic Year, *FW* 282 : 23 ; 292 : 30).

Drawing on the Sumerian and Babylonian association of the decad (as a ‘limit’ number) with the beginning and close of an aeon of time, Pythagoras raised the basic division of odd and even numbers to a cosmic understanding of Same (unity) and Other (duality)—given a Yeatsian cast on *FW* 300 : 20-23. The relationship he established between the denary and tetrad ( $1+2+3+4=10$ ) was played on by early gnostic and hermetic Christians for the transformation of the Roman X into a new era (“aosch”, *FW* 82 : 2), as Eva is reversed to Ave, in which all directions, all pairs of opposites will be lodged and reconciled at one point in time. In this scheme, 1 is the logograph for unity, the disembodied principle of numbering, whereas 2 represents the potential for the extension of numerical principle and relationship to the dimensions of the material world. Euclid’s proposition begins “*Protasis* On a given finite straight line to construct an equilateral triangle”, for 3 is the first number—as A-L-P define the three points of a surface—with a beginning, middle and end: “Anna was, Livia is, Plurabelle’s to be.” The “mamafesta” itself locates Pythagoras in an anamorphic mirror where his weighty pronouncements are reduced to the grunts (“... uggamyg ...”)<sup>2</sup> of primeval couples: “So hath been, love : tis tis : and will be” (*FW* 116 : 30-36). The 1-2-3 of Pythagoras corresponds in cabalism to the primary unity of Aleph, realization of duality in Beth, and Gimel as the hieroglyph of rebirth into a new order of time: “Mac Auliffe ... MacBeth ... MacGhimley” (*FW* 290 : 6-7).

Notably in the *Timaeus*, Plato reveals his Pythagorean learning by proposing a model for the soul comprised of the reconciled opposition of active and passive attributes (which is also filtered through Yeats on *FW* 300 : 20-23). As Plato’s prime interlocutor asserts, it is actually two sorts of triangles that constitute the universal elements and the template for the Good, True and Beautiful in the fashioning of the material world by form and number. For Macrobius and other commentators, this was the origin of the Platonic *lambda* (*FW* 294 : 4 ; 297 : 10), by which two legs of an open cone descend from the monadal point of a pair of calipers showing, on the one leg, the arithmetical progression from 2 and, on the other, geometrical progression from 3. Most interesting—for the almond (or vulva [*FW* 297 : 27]) form and for the Joycean emphasis on the spinning roles of the *tergemlna* Heavenly Mother, Great Earth Mother and the

Femme Fatale alike<sup>3</sup> – is the hypothesis of Timaeus that the circles of heaven and the zodiac revolve uniformly around a diamond spindle at the core of the universe by which all of the planetary orbits are measured and, thus, from which all human fates are conceived and spun out.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the triangle and kindred geometric shapes have lent themselves to calculations of practical geometry ; in measuring angles between two distant objects, sighting is made through a magnifying lens attached to a sextant or similar framing instrument, so that light rays travelling from objects to the sighting device may be used to define the sides of a triangle. At the same time, triangular shapes have lent themselves to the speculative geometry of metaphysical trinities in which the natural language for articulating the ineffable is the universal imagery of mythology : “On the name of the tizzer and off the tongs and off the mythame-tical tripods.” (FW 286 : 23-24)

Only the language of myth abides and flourishes in the coexistence of contrary propositions, of sacred and profane ; can synthesize monochrome readings of 11 : 2 offered seriatim by Joyce criticism ; and can simultaneously embrace the property of Wakean language through which any assured reading automatically presumes the validity of a contrary proposition. For instance, just after the Euclidean design we encounter “old Sure Isaac’s universal of specious arismystic” (293 : 27-28) and the “loose carollaries ever Ellis threw his cookingclass” (294 : 7-8). Blending Isaac the father of Jacob with Newton the father of gravitational laws and particle theory of light rays sustains the chapter’s characteristic amalgam of ‘science’ with theology, fantasy and legend : “Dawn gives rise ... Eve takes fall.” (293 : 30-31) The second fragment weds Alice and the author of *Algebra Identified with Geometry*. The balance of this essay will probe the mythopoeic logic of the intersectional space housing the triangles in order to trace the basis on which disparate cultures find common cause in a universal mythic image ; at the same time, it will subvert prospects for final attribution or localizing of mythogenesis.

The conjectural attributions to the *vesica piscis* of the almond-like interstice/*ritcorso* between circling aeons in the Euclidean proposition are reinforced by textual echoes (297 : 6 ; 299 : 34) and by the association with the Second Coming. The importance of the attribution is not just that it fits the motif of incarnation, death and resurrection which threads through Joyce’s chapter from one end to the other ; but also that it enjoyed immense popularity throughout the Middle Ages, that it joined

Christian and pagan stories with ease, and that its originary rationale was lost at an early date to the minds of the artists and artisans who plied its polymorphous forms. In 14th- and 15th-century Tuscany alone, the churches of Siena, Pisa and Florence abound with Christs housed in the twin circles of infinity, in the *mandorla* (It. 'almond'), and in a diamond superposed on four intersecting circles, as in Taddeo Gaddi's paintings in the Academia or on Ghiberti's Baptistery doors. In many of these instances, as on the tympanum of the 'Sunset' portal of Chartres Cathedral, Christ of the Apocalypse is attended by the symbols of the zodiac or – which is much the same thing – by the four gospelists whose symbols correspond to the stations at the quadrants of the zodiac. And most provocative of all are the Vatican Pinacoteca's Peruginos in which Christ in the *mandorla* sits in majesty above a squared circle.

By the late Romanesque florescence in Normandy and North Armorica sculptors had forgotten that the *mandorla* originated in early Byzantine renditions of the Son of God crowned by a squared-circle halo, a common symbolic expression for the marriage of the circular heaven with the four directions of earth: "One recalls Byzantium. The mystery repeats itself todate" (*FW* 294 : 28-29).<sup>6</sup> There is a lesson to be learned here about the risky business of attributing mythic origins outside of a specific cultural tradition. For the *hierosgamos* wedding the four corners of earth with the zodiac wheeling eternally around Polaris – consummated through sexualized ritual of renewal at the apex of a pyramid – takes us back at least to the ziggurats of ancient Sumer in the 4th millennium B.C. But so too does the lore of the Djed-pillar of Osiris ("Le hélos tombaut", *FW* 280 : 25). In the principal tale of this myth, the primeval couple Isis and her brother-consort Osiris are separated when the latter is imprisoned in a coffin by 72 assailants (72 : the number of years required for the precession of the equinoxes to move one degree) which was ultimately lodged in the base of a Tree of Life, symbolizing the world Mountain Mother – tree (HCE) and stone (ALP) alike – which eats back into the earth the life it has borne.

The Tree of Life is symbolized in the lifeless stone of the Djed-pillar : at the juncture of rectangular world with solar sphere are a pair of almond eyes for sight beyond life's illusory pairs of opposite qualities, surmounted by interlocking ram and cow horns (symbolic of the sexes in union, as of death and life), which in turn cradle the sun. It is the conical rays of the sun that protect the slumbering Osiris. Following the *sparagmos*

of the missing sun god, Isis goes in search of her lord who is restored intact, except that his penis has been devoured by a fish. Osiris returns to his glory as judge of the quick and the dead after the exchange of the testicle of Seth for the left eye of Horus—the two contending sons of Osiris (cf. Odin who is protected by the Sophia-like Volva, sacrifices his left eye, and hangs for 9 days on the World Tree Yggdrasil). The hieroglyph for the circle of the iris with the pupil as centre (*wadza*) is known as ‘the sun in the mouth’ (or the creative Word). Thus, on classical papyri Osiris is attended by the four sons of Horus riding atop the corolla of a water lily, the mythic image—like the Hindu lotus or Christian rose—of the matrix from which all incarnate life is made flesh: “la rosa in che ’l verbo divino carne si fece” (cf. *FW* 292).

This complete mythic symbology operates with great complexity—amid elm, stone, almond forms and four gospelists—throughout the *Wake* (e.g., pp. 94, 234-35). Horus is outfitted with the head of the sun-hawk and the tail of a bull, for daily he is the ever-dying, ever-reborn sun and hence is identified with the father in various ways (*FW* 328 : 34) ; for one, since he is apparently regenerated spontaneously, he is known (as was Pharaoh) as the “bull of his own mother”. Likewise, the Mesopotamian moon god Sin mediated the wedding of earth and sun, and thus was endowed with exceptional procreative powers. His attributes are, then, the intersecting earthly and heavenly triangles of “fire and water” in addition to “strong horns” which cast the reflection of intersecting arcs, in token of the waxing and waning lunar phases (*FW* 212 : 25-26 ; 365 : 09-10) ; thus, he is known as “mother womb, begetter of all things”<sup>6</sup>. The companion scene in the *Wake* occurs towards the end when all-wise ALP beneath the nimbus of “the clothing moon” tells of the march of the constellations and of how she came armed with the elixir of life (urine or beer) to console her old man, beset by “emotional volvular”, in his guardroom confinement. Amid fractured references to Crimea, the history of Ireland and England, peace symbols, Isis and Osiris (after HCE produces his “propendiculous loadpoker”), ALP’s inquisitor intones “Let Eivin remember for Gates of Gold for their fadeless suns betrayed her. Irise, Osirises ! Be thy mouth given unto thee !” (493 : 27-28) Soon after, HCE lies in state but elevated to the status of world figure, amid his splendid titles and holdings, including “jordan almonders” (497 : 31).

Clearly, an attempt to restore the Christian *mandorla* to its quasi-official source in the hierogamy of square and circle in the Byzantine

nurecole—the intersection of all moments of time and all points of space—simply mimics the continual transposition and variations-on-theme that have characterized mythopoeic logic since the earliest strata of the *Rig Veda*. Joyce geometrically complicates the inextricable problem. An obvious and significant limiting context for close scrutiny would be the passage in 11 : 2 from Issy's footnote, following her professor's analysis of sex and politics, until chapter's end (pp. 279-308) ; i.e., we handily begin at the interstice between the two major study periods. The daughter at once of ALP and Eve, Issy in her private note purportedly deals with her budding sexual urges ("wait till spring has sprung ..." 279 : 22), but her language anticipates the metaphysical implications of the geometry lesson : "Quick erit faciofacey [Q.E.F.]. When we will conjugate ... verbe de vie and verve de vie." At the outset the note is placed against the backdrop of "the thrills and ills of laylock blossoms". The scenic detail and its context require several initial observations, which inform the balance of the study of Triv and Quad. First, the question of conjugating the Logos through the incarnation of Spirit and flesh poses the fundamental theological and metaphysical problem of the chapter, one that reverberates through the *Wake* in jest ("Hasitatense ?" 296 : 36 [hesitency]) as well as solemn earnest ("DIVINITY NOT DEITY ... inexcissible as thy by God ways", 282 ; 285 : 33-34). Shortly before the first formulation in the Byzantine Church of the square-plus-circle *mandorla* of Christ, the argument raged in gnostic and proto-hermetic sects on the immanence of God's Word and on the legibility and understanding of the Creator's writing in the *liber mundi*. In the thick of this controversy, Justin Martyr cited the lesson that Pythagoras had supposedly learned in Egypt : "God is one. And He is not, as some think, outside the world, but in it, for He is entirely in the whole circle looking over all generations."<sup>7</sup> The ambivalent description of godhead leaves us between mysticism—tracking the penumbral traces of a deity who inhabits the humblest objects but whose essence is best known by the evidence of its absence—and empiricism—puzzling through rules of order and solving the geometry conceived by the *noûs* of the masterbuilder and illustrated according to weight, shape and measure.

A second observation on Issy's footnote setting not only underscores the pervasiveness and mutations of the lilac blossom in the linguistic subtlety of the pubescent footnotes<sup>8</sup> ; but from cover to cover it also substantiates the legendary fall and scandalous arrest of HCE, beset by

the devil in the flesh ("There are 29 sweet reasons why blossomtime's the best. Elders fall for green almonds when they're raised on bruised stone ..." *FW* 64 : 36), and the dart of desire at the end (*FW* 599-600) that "has gored the heart of secret waters", thus precipitating the regeneration of life and the cycle of aeons. In the latter episode, "the old man of the sea and the old woman in the sky", Father Time and Mother Space rejoin in the images of rock slab and almond tree ("There an alomdree begins to green", *FW* 600 : 20 ; cf. 293 : 24) to renew the world of forms. The almond (blossom) is an archaic symbol of divine immanence and rebirth in Near-Eastern mystery religions and in matrilineal cults of the Great Mother throughout the Fertile Crescent. The dying god Attis, for instance, was the son of Cybele in her generalized and divine aspect and of his particular mother, the virginal Nana, who conceived by placing a ripe almond (or a pomegranate in some versions, like Persephone) in her bosom.<sup>9</sup> But it is in Hebrew texts where tree and stone figure most prominently.

The ritualized description of the Ark of the Covenant in Exodus 25 : 33-34 reaches to a folkloric stratum in the oral tradition of the *Habiru* which is much older than the books of laws. There the proper disposition of almond cups around the seven-branch candelabra is prescribed, but is obviously more recent than later instances, such as the rod of Aaron which sprouted almond blossoms as a sign of his election as well as a death threat for those who might break Yahweh's laws (Numbers 17 : 8-10). It was the rod of Aaron, not that of Moses, which was placed in the Ark of the Covenant, together with the Tables of the Law and the pot of manna (Heb. 9 : 4). Like the Babylonian serpent god who was deposed in Eden but who persistently grew from the staffs of Hebrew leaders as a trace of early ophidian worship and was eventually pictured hanging from a cross (Exod. 4 : 2-4 ; 17 : 1-7 ; Num. 21 : 5-9 ; 11 Kings 18 : 4 ; *FW* 289 : 7), emergence from a branch as a sign of God's wrath or benevolence belongs to a familiar, ancient typology. Threat and benefaction are simultaneously assured much later in God's election of Jeremiah who, on seeing a branch of the flowering almond tree, hears the voice of the Lord : "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it." (Jer. 1 : 11-12) Both overseer and Judge, here Yahweh puns significantly on the phonic resemblances (shaqedh/sho-quedh ...) among the words for *almond*, *perception* and *awakening*, since the almond tree was the first to bloom in the spring.

But by far the most important mention in Hebrew lore of the shape and properties of the almond is also a unifying knot for many disparate illusions in 11 : 2 and elsewhere. Genesis 28 : 17-19 is a fundamental text for establishing the affiliation of the patriarchs and kings from Noah to Solomon in the margin of *FW* 307. That Biblical passage relates the epiphany of God to the dreaming Jacob who, on awakening, proclaimed "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" -- a common mythic image-term for the paradoxical point of passage from one mode of being to a qualitatively different one. Jacob then anointed a pyramidal pillar of stone with oil : "He called the name of that place Bethel ; but the name of the city was Luz at the first."<sup>10</sup> Bab-llu, 'Gate of Heaven', in Hebraic tradition became synonymous with confusion and arrogance ; the Babylon recension of Eastern (sunrise) and Western (sunset) gates is also the origin of Penelope's gates of the dream in *Odyssey* 19 : 562. The mysterious indigo city of Luz, the mythical forerunner of Beth-el and eventually Bethlehem, derives from another Hebrew word meaning 'almond', 'blossoming almond tree', and by extrapolation the almond nut itself which reveals its fruit at the same time that it hides its essence and safeguards its inviolacy : "doubleviewed seeds" (*FW* 296 : 1), as it were ; hence, the almond tree has come to symbolize the Holy Virgin.<sup>11</sup> Coincidence of corner stone and tree originates (and here the dim recesses of folklore hardly authorize such an assertive verb) from the legends of the proximity of the City to an almond tree whose bark was so bone-like that the Angel of Death could penetrate neither walls nor wood (*lignum vitae*). The conjectural etymology of *luz* ties it variously to infinitesimal corporeality represented symbolically by hard bone (Ezekiel : "Son of man, can these bones live ?") which adheres to the soul after death and assists in resurrection<sup>12</sup> ; and it seems to derive from the root of a tree where the horizon mediates between the downward and upward directions of the apexes--as in the triangular Fire (*Chokmah*) and Water (*Binah*) of the cabala. Simultaneous emphasis in the legend of *luz* on the manifest and the hidden is essential, inasmuch as a hollow near the base of the tree allows entry into a cave which in turn is the lone access to the City buried in Mother Earth. This detail has been instrumental in the formulation of theologies of the resurrection of fallen man, of reversal of the established order, and of the reflection of the celestial in the subterranean (e.g., Daniel 12 : 2-10 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 42-49). It also takes the mythological imagery of Genesis 28 into areas that both



diffuse and centre otherwise inexplicable mythic allusions in 11 : 2. According to medieval 'legends of the cross', the X of Christ (XPI) stemmed from the Tree of Knowledge, so that the agency of the Fall became that of redemption ; Adam's skull was supposed to have been buried on Golgotha, 'the place of the skull'. One could argue, then, that the "Interplay of Bones in the Womb" in the margin just below Joyce's Euclidean figure with its almond space, generative of innumerable meanings, might be associated with the *os crucis* located behind the uterus ; if so, it thus informs our understanding of the crossed bones beneath the illustration of the cabalistic Great Father at the close of 11 : 2.

The problem and mystery of attribution of the *mandorla* — whether in its use as all-seeing eye or all-bearing womb — is that the image and related sacred narrative are of worldwide diffusion and recede to time out of mind ; examples of "doublends joined" are ready at hand from all quarters. The City beneath the Tree of Life belongs to the larger class of narratives catalogued in *The Golden Bough* where an *axis mundi* is endowed with numinous presence. To the degree that the diamond can be viewed as a stylized *mandorla*, as the wedding of square and circle of Joyce's inset double triangle would suggest, the North American Indian legends become germane in which the first parents issued through the hollow trunk of a venerated tree from their subterranean birth vault. Erich Neumann cites numerous neolithic female figurines from matriarchal Thrace and Crete whose unifying characteristic is a pair of diamond shapes with apexes tangent at the vulva or womb.<sup>13</sup> The Cretan example is instructive since the double axe blades (*labrys*), intersecting to reproduce a *mandorla* as do Euclid's circles, symbolized the Great Goddess whose hegemony was evinced by her control of the lunar rhythms (cf. *FW* 244 : 5 ; 485 : 26) and mastery of the subterranean labyrinth.

In the western tradition some of these legends have had an immense longevity due to the adaptability of their mythic imagery. Such is the Phrygian tale of the All-Father Amygdalos (almond tree) who harboured "the perfect fruit pulsating and stirring in the depths" and who gave birth to the "invisible, thousand-eyed unnameable One." Secreted like *Momus* amid the roots from which all life springs, and affiliated with the *Logos* and *pneuma* of the Annunciation, it was natural for early Christians to see in him the "mustard-seed, the invisible point ... which none know save the spiritual alone."<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the Greeks of Indo-Aryan provenance synthesized the mythology of the archaic mother cult attached to

Aphrodite, the Ewig-Weibliche (cf. *FW* 116 : 36-117 : 1). Like the yarn-spinning Penelope, the web-weaving Eve ("madameen spinning watersilts", *FW* 21 : 6) and the Virgin who is often pictured holding the strand of the universe which intersects the *mandorla* of her womb,<sup>15</sup> early accounts of Aphrodite link her as Clotho with the three spinning fates, and (like her counterparts in Pima, Zuni and Mayan myth) assign her the task of weaving rainclouds from the skein of the moon. Here the grounds of metaphor were the similarity of thread of life to umbilical cord, whirling movement of the spindle to the perpetual 'word in progress' of the vital *pneuma* flowing over the surface of all life, and of course the proximate resemblance of the spindle shape to the vulva : "Problem ye ferst, construct ann aquilittoral dryankle Probe loom !" (*FW* 286 : 20) In the *Tiimaus* (36b-39b) and especially in the myth of Er the Armenian in the *Republic* (X : 616c-617b) Plato imagined that the axis or navel of the cosmos was a huge diamond-shaped spindle of necessity that measured and regulated the dance of the planets. In some instances, the whirling spindle is styled as a conical seed pod of the lotus (seen as triangular from the side and circular from the top). The form evolved from the Mesopotamian lunar cone emblematic of the sanctity of a city's walls, or as a spiral ("gyrotundo" *FW* 295 : 24), embodying both the generative power of Nature and the texture of her handiwork. She is even portrayed with a serpentine double helix encircling her spinal column and issuing from the dome of her head as locks of Medusa.<sup>16</sup>

At the necessary risk of oversimplification, perspective requires that the examples above, drawn mainly from the Eastern Mediterranean and Fertile Crescent, be illumined by the Indo-Aryan and Sanskrit marginalia scattered through the balance of 11 : 2 : "Asia in Ireland". Shortly after the presentation of the geometric diagram, Joyce's pedantic "Sarga, or the path of outgoing" appears in the left-hand margin as shorthand for a fundamental, complementary process of the cosmos. On the one hand, it denotes creation of the *prima materia* seen only in Maya's web of illusion ; on the other, it is the voiding in the moment of Shiva's cataclysmic dance or, in the microcosm, the breathless hush following the utterance of the cosmic syllable OM. Often transcribed as AUM (as in "Salam, salms, Salaum", *FW* 360 : 27), the three elements of the diphthong (surrounded by silence as the fourth component) correspond to the stages of wakening and dream and thus may be linked to the three Vichian stages of mythical history, along with *ricorso*. OM is the germ seed of

speech and manifestation of the Logos. It embodies the indestructible essence of the triple Vedas and is symbolically present in the *mandorla* shaped enclosure of the hands in prayerful attitude, which is also a symbol of Maya. Hence, OM shares the same symbol as the woven texture of the world's appearance, and in Devanagari transcription is seen in the outline of Shiva's dance spelling the closure of the cosmic circle of time. The syllable echoes in the pages following the diagram—"omething... figuratively the whome of your eternal geomater... the logos of someone... her undescribables... my omission"—and informs our understanding of the diagram's permutations in a way that is not apparent from the conventions of western readings.

René Guénon discusses a late 15th-century transcendental symbol of the Order of Carmelites which has some startling implications for the philosophy of symbolic forms and, thus, for Joycean geometry. Guénon reminds us that the Carmelites entered western horizons through their affiliation with the Order of Elijah and with Pythagorean and Solomonic learning. The symbol, Guénon continues, is an abbreviation for Ave Maria and, at its roots, of the Logos—alpha and omega. Most interesting is his demonstration that the geometric configuration is also a rebus for AUM, and in its various formal inflections is seen in conjunction with the superimposition of twin circles which forms the Star of Solomon; a line through the horizontal median marks the reflection of the upper eight lines in the lower eight.<sup>17</sup> One of the most durable symbols of Thomism and medieval hermeticism in general was the six-pointed Seal of Solomon (symbol of Christ) of which the joined triangles were taken to represent the *hierogamos* of Spirit and matter and the reflection of the creative breath (*ruach Adonai*) on the oceanic chaos of Genesis 1 : 2 : "Salmonson not his steel on a hexengown... distinct and isoplural in its (your sow to the double) sixuous parts, flument, fluvey and fluteous" (*FW* 297 : 3, 21-22). Without doubt, separation of the "waters from the waters" of Genesis 1 : 6 originated from Mesopotamian cosmological texts, as did the "earth-diver" motif in the creation of Adam from mud (Genesis 2 : 7). Thus, the creation re-enactment of "Anny liffle mud which cometh out of Mam" may indeed conjure up Matthew 15 : 11<sup>18</sup> but, through Joyce's brilliant refraction of Biblical texts, it also points to the Hebrew *malm*, the waters which in Genesis 1 : 6 take the grammatical form of the dual, allowing for the idea of double chaos of form and formlessness as a shared potentiality.

The divine reflection on and inflection of the water directly informs not only Joyce's emendation of Euclid but also the marginal Sanskrit notation following 'Sarga' on page 294 : "Maya-Thaya. Tamas-Rajas-Sattvas." The initial pair of terms deals with the infusion of cosmic appearance into *pr̥ma materia* (Thaya/Thea), while the triad of *gunas* can be summarized as inertia, activity, resolution—roughly comparable to Plato's desire, emotion, and intelligence, and to the roles assigned by tradition to the three Graces. In Hindu creation myths (as in the *Book of the Dead*), the incarnation of spirit (*purusha*) in matter (*prakriti*) weds Immutability with becoming, which share the same noun in Sanskrit (*bhu* ; cf. *FW* 394 : 31-35). Illusion of identity is merely the appearance of maya, just as solar and lunar illumination, when viewed at the opposite poles of the horizon during a moonrise, appear equal in size and intensity : "As the image of the sun reflected in water quivers and fluctuates in accordance with the undulations of the water" (*Brahma-Sutras* 2 : 3. 46-53). Like Joyce's Euclidean relativity, the water represents the potential sum of all formal possibilities emanating in conical rays from the single source of illumination, as in the *Rig Veda*.<sup>19</sup> In primitive mythologies, the sun at moonrise shoots its solar shaft, wounding and causing the moon to wane and disappear for three days—like Christ in the tomb, before rising at Easter when the superposed waning and waxing lunar crescents form the inner space of *mandorla*. So it is that the Euclidean drawing is surrounded by verbal and symbolic figurations (e.g., *FW* 292 : 11-12 ; 298 : 1, 13) of opposed or attracted vertices which in mythological systems articulate imminent reversal of the established order and symbolize the World Mountain (*alp pla*), in combination with the divine twins in their subterranean cavern-city or of the expanding branches and roots of the World Tree. The progressive transformation of the *gunas* is schematized in triangular form, as the three theological virtues are framed in the gothic *mandorla*.

The hourglass drum of Shiva sounds the pulsebeat which draws the veil of temporality across the face of the eternal void ; this conventional symbol is sanctioned by the inverted cones of the World Tree in *Rig Veda* 3 : 7. 1-3 (cf. *FW* 80 : 23). Symbols merge into language as the geometrical symbols from the Pythagorean quincunx, corner stone of the material world and promise of quintessential transcendence : "Quaint a quincidence".<sup>20</sup> In Mesopotamian myth the quincunx represented the five 'void' days of *ricorso* following the 360-day year and the tip of the

pyramidal ziggurat to which the four directional sides rise, site of the sacred marriage of heaven and earth. Sumerian astronomers attempted to solve the enigma of the "navel of the goddess", i.e., the mystery of the 360-degree revolution of the zodiac around Polaris and of the derivation through mathematics of multiplicity from unity. Their discovery that the equinoxes precess at the approximate rate of 52 seconds per year ultimately led to the cipher 432 (St. Patrick's arrival in Eire, etc.) as the key to beginning and completion of cosmic rounds. Their other revelation was the key number 3.1416. The connection is clear, in the figuration of the mother, with Shem/Dolph's assignment of Pi to the navel and P to the fruitful womb.

Illumination (*sattvas*) as the ultimate goal of the three qualities of personality is implicitly carried into the marginal notation (page 303) on the seven 'force centres' of yoga, which continues the foliation of triangles from the universal matrix. The serpent represents the rise of spiritual heat, along and around the spinal column from the genital seeds and "Holy Bone" (*sacral*) at the base to the "intertemporal eye". The first station at the heart is represented in conventional symbolism by a lotus containing a double triangle, identical with the Seal of Solomon, within which is a stylized form of a *yoni* housing a shining *lingam*; here we are in perfect balance, as opposed to the fighting words in the text ("Upanishadem... Eregobragh") and brother battle (*FW* 303 : 13-15 ; cf. 404 : 18). Illumination is reserved for the intertemporal eye of Shiva, which sees beyond limitations of water and fire, "solar past" and "lunar future".<sup>21</sup> Seeing beyond space/time constraints, the eye reduces all maya appearance to ashes from which it is reborn Phoenix-like in greater illumination. Thus, it abides in an eternal present as the epitome of all time ; and as a mere geometrical point without dimension in the spatial order, it bears the potential for all extension through space.

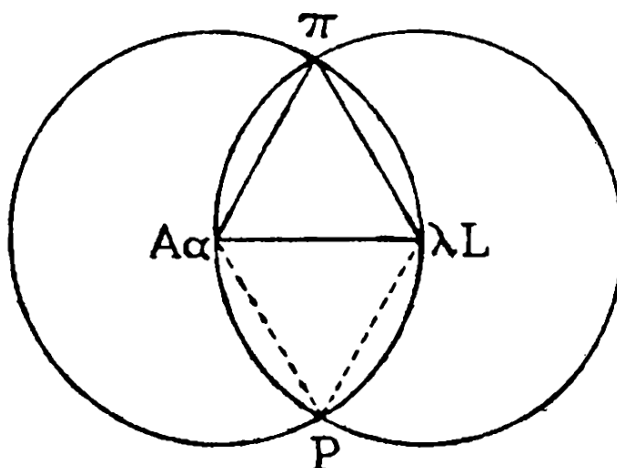
By far the most pertinent configuration of Shiva's insight in Hindu symbology, for comparison with Joyce's Euclid, is the endlessly reborn, triangular exfoliation from the cosmic lotus known as Shri Yantra (cf. *FW* 80 : 24-25 ; 292 : 11-12). The geometric pattern shows a square with a portal on each directional side, drawn with triple serrated lines marking the figure's dimensional orientation in space. Inside the square is an eight-petaled lotus, such as in the heart *chakra* of the "Force Centres of the Fire Serpentine", signifying regeneration. The lotus is actually part of a triple aureole, signifying the 'subtle' world that is intermediate in a three-

part cosmos between matter and spirit. And inside the lotus circle are five triangles with apexes pointed down, interwoven with four triangles with apexes upward ; the upward triangles (*vahni*) symbolize the renewable life-potential that is epitomized in semen ("the seim anew"), whereas the four triangles (*shakti*) symbolize the eternal feminine, for Shakti is the consort of the transcendental Shiva.<sup>22</sup> The overlayed triangles create the optical illusion of progressive expansion from or graduated reduction to an imaginary point (*bindu*) in the smallest, central triangle. This is the metaphysical point from which primordial energy radiates, and so its presence is in the eye of the enlightened beholder. At the heart of the squared circle, then, we find the formlessness that is symbolic of the cosmic void.

Like the well known Shri Yantra, examples of the interwoven square/cube, (hemi-)sphere, and trigon could be reproduced geometrically, as by mitosis, without furthering principal arguments. Since a spate of texts and icons could be cited from mythologies that not even Joyce could have known, critical discourse would risk degenerating into open-ended speculation on basic forms of fermented language. Inadvertently, the reproduction (or 'foliation') of kindred images that undergird disparate beliefs would paraphrase in scholar's language the proliferation of mythology in its more natural habitat. The necessary wager, however, is this : aided by an encyclopaedia of comparable forms and investments of meaning, in both stylized miniaturization and elaborated cosmic projection, the microscopy of deconstruction may enhance our understanding of the sustained expansion and reduction of mythic language in the *Wake*. Critical commentary saturated with scholarly apparatus might be necessary in the supersaturated depths of "Triv and Quad" in order to reconstruct a modest fraction of any of the chapter's 'grids'. It should be evident that in marshalling appropriate texts for comparison, the limiting yet labyrinthine paradigm of Graeco-Roman mythology should be diminished, although it is frequently the main reference point of western readers. Meticulously peeling through the layers of Joyce's text to archaic and forgotten strata in the language of myth will illumine forms that have survived the life and death cycles of mythological systems, since theirs is the obscure and inexhaustible source of energy and illumination for the mind's eye.

Coss ? Cossist ? Your parn ! You, you make  
 what name ? (and in truth, as a poor soul is  
 between shift and shift ere the death he has  
 lived through becomes the life he is to die  
 into, he or he had albut—he was rickets as to  
 reasons but the balance of his minds was  
 stables—lost himself or himself some som-  
 nione sciupiones, soswhitchoverswetch had  
 he or he gazet, murphy come, murphy go,  
 murphy plant, murphy grow, a maryamyria-  
 meliamurphies, in the lazily eye of his lapis,

WHY MY AS  
 LIKEWISE  
 WHIS HIS.



*Uteralter-* Vieus Von DVbLin, 'twas one of dozedreams  
*ance or the* a darkies ding in dewood) the Turnpike under  
*Interplay* the Great Ulm with Mearingstone in Fore  
*of Bones in* ground).<sup>1</sup> Given now ann linch you take enn  
*the Womb.*

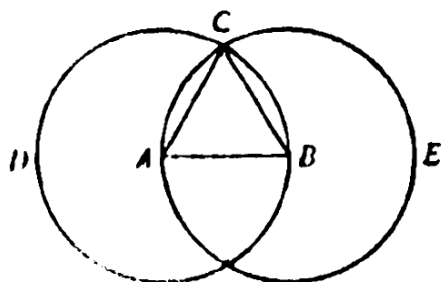


Figure 1.2

*Protasis* On a given finite straight line to  
 construct an equilateral triangle.

*Ekthesis* Let  $AB$  [fig. 1.2] be the given  
 finite straight line.

*Diorismos* Thus it is required to construct  
 an equilateral triangle on the straight  
 line  $AB$ .

*Kataskeue* With center  $A$  and distance  $AB$

let the circle *BCD* have been described ; again with center *B* and distance *BA* let the circle *ACE* have been described ; and from the point *C* in which the circles cut one another to the points *A*, *B* let the straight lines *CA*, *CB* have been joined.

*Apodeixis* Now since the point *A* is the center of the circle *CDB*, *AC* is equal to *AB*. Again, since the point *B* is the center of the circle *CAE*, *BC* is equal to *BA*. But *CA* was also proved equal to *AB* ; therefore each of the straight lines *CA*, *CB* is equal to *AB*. And things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another ; therefore *CA* is also equal to *CB*. Therefore the three straight lines *CA*, *AB*, *BC* are equal to one another.

*Sumperasma* Therefore the triangle *ABC* is equilateral ; and it has been constructed on the given finite straight line. Which was required to be done (Q.E.F.)

## NOTES

1 Exegeses of the diagram's link with Yeats's *A Vision* or with the sigla of the Doodles family inscribed in its entirety can easily be found in the literature. The scattershot analogies of Roland McHugh are probably the most incisive (*The Sigla of "Finnegans Wake"* [Arnold : London, 1976], pp. 67-76).

2 Literally 'awe-almondlike', according to I.-E. etymology.

3 Cf. Stephen's fantasy of navel cords linking humanity with the original mother, in *Ulysses* (Random House : New York, 1961), p. 38. From the etymology of her name Penelope is veiled by the yarn she spins, materially evident in matronymic attribute (*pene* = 'spindle'). The first "Oxen of the Sun" Notesheet shows a progression of concentric almond shapes exfoliating from a single point ; cf. the inter-sectional *mandorlas* and similar progression from the mouth of the sun (*ruach Elohim*) in the General Plan of Cabalistic Doctrine, cited in Eliphas Lévi's *History of Magic* (Weiser : New York, 1973), p. 325.

4 Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis expositio*, 11. 2. Cf. *FW* 293 : 7-8.

5 René Guénon discusses exchange of vegetal for mineral, circle for square in Heavenly Jerusalem (*L'Esotérisme de Dante* [Gallimard : Paris, 1957], p. 67).

6 See R.W. Rogers, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* (Eaton and Mains : New York, 1908), p. 164. Scholars have attempted to unite these two cults into one hypothetical ur-cult. The eye of Horus atop the pyramid on the verso of the American dollar bill surmounts a Latin legend ("A new order of time begins well"). Revolutionary golden ages (e.g., the Krita Yuga) begin thus.

7 *Exhortation to the Greeks* (19) in *Writings of Saint Justin Martyr* (Catholic University of America Press : Washington, 1948), p. 396.

8 "Indiana Blues" of p. 285 refers to the *mandorla*-shaped double arc of the



chapter's various rainbows ; at the same time, the etymology of this indigo stems from Sanskrit *nīla*—also the word for the blossom of the almond tree.

9 Frazer attributes the legend to the Phrygian cosmogony in which the almond stands as the image of the All-Father and “springs from the genitals of a man-monster”, *The Golden Bough* (Macmillan : New York, 1951), 5 : 263, 269.

10 Cf. *FW* 139 : 12 and the closing scene where St. Kevin rises from the lake of night to mark the dawn of Christianity in Eire : “Jakob van der Bethel ... with Essav of Messagepostumia” (607 : 8-9). See also Grace Eckley, *Children's Lore in Finnegans Wake* (Syracuse University Press : Syracuse, 1985), p. 73.

11 *Bethlehem* : “House of Bread” ; cf. the Devil's command that Christ turn stones to bread as proof of his divinity (Matt. 4 : 3) and Christ as the manna from heaven admonishing that “man does not live by bread alone but by each word that comes from God's mouth.” See Joseph Campbell on the “house of food” and *anna-maya-kosha* (‘appearance-in the aspect-of food’) in *Skeleton Key to “Finnegans Wake”* (Penguin : New York, 1980), p. 166 ; *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* (Br. 2) where the fiery creator hovers over the surface of primeval waters, and creative speech and knowledge are ‘food’ for thought ; and *FW* 300 : 23.

12 Cf. Buck Mulligan's parodistic “What's bred in the bone cannot fail me to fly”, *Ulysses*, p. 19. Leibnitz's atomistic reduction after death of perpetually living matter comes to mind, and, as always, Blake of the *Four Zoas* and *Milton* : “The nature of a Female Space is thus : it shrinks the Organs/Of Life till they become Finite and Itself seems Infinite” (*Milton* I.10.6-7). Cf. *FW* 57 : 1-7 and 298 : 8-9 : “her littlenist of no magnetude.”

13 *The Great Mother* (Princeton University Press : Princeton, 1974), plates 6, 55. Cf. the paleolithic *mandorlas* from North America and the twin diamonds enclosed in the trunk of an *axis mundi* (ca. 200 B.C.) cited by Joseph Campbell in *The Way of Zen* (Harper & Row : San Francisco, 1983), pp. 76, 213. Robert Gessain cites similar figurations from clinical dreamwork involving patients suffering from severe castration anxiety or neurotic obsession with the threatening appearance of the mother's genitals (“Vagina dentata dans la clinique et mythologie”, *Psychanalyse* 3 [1957], 258). Indeed, dreamwork has been invoked for insight into the *Wake*'s oneiric scenes and language. Insofar as intersecting circles may be read as a prism affording refracted views of Dublin, like a philosopher's stone capable of enhancing our vision beyond appearances, consider Jung's *rapprochement* of a Roman temple floor near Carthage and the drawing of a patient suffering from an inordinate maternal impact on his life. Both show an almond-shaped eye with serpents ‘rampant’ at the corners. The emendation of Jung's patient is to draw in a water line so that one orbital arc is submerged and at the same time reflected in the other (*Collected Works* [Princeton University Press : Princeton, 1959], vol. 9, figs. 43, 44). Equation of eye and genital is familiar to myth both western (the temporary ‘blindness’ of Achilles with Patroclus ; the condign punishment of Oedipus) and eastern (Amaterasu born from the almond eye of her solar father).

14 See Hippolytus, *Philosophumena : Refutation of All Heresies* (Translations of Christian Literature : London, 1921), I : 140-42. Amid the whisperings of tree and stone, the story of HCE is rehearsed from A to O, complete with “A pair of sycophantic eyes with amygdaline eyes... And that was how from Sin to Son, acidity rose.” (94 :

16-19 ; cf. 183 : 12 and 296 : 3 ; John 1 : 1-3 ; Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* [Vintage Books : New York, 1964], p. 72).

15 Cf. the juxtaposition of spindle and fish housed in the middle of a *mandorla*, in J.B. Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton University Press : Princeton, 1954), p. 144.

16 The last sentence draws substantially on Elmer Suhr, *The Spinning Aphrodite Helios* : New York, 1969), pp. 34, 66, 140, 160. Cf. *FW* 292 : 20-21.

17 *Le Roi du monde* (Editions traditionnelles : Paris, 1950), pp. 19, 33-35.

18 Roland McHugh, *Annotations to Finnegans Wake* (Johns Hopkins University Press : Baltimore, 1980), p. 287. See the crosshatching of Last Supper and "pigeon's pneu" [breath of the Holy Spirit] "on the face of the waters" (*FW* 458 : 16, 21. The "broad and hairy face" in the margin at the beginning of 11 : 2 is sometimes shown as Macroprosopos at the apex of an upright triangle, whose darkened reflection on the waters appears as Microprosopos at the apex of an inverted triangle ; the legs of the triangle symbolize the door pillars of Solomon's temple and hence the polarities of active/passive, Cain/Abel, right/duty (*FW* 260, 287 : 11). In such configurations of cabalistic symbolism, the head of the Zohar is often shown inside a triangle, with the Star of Solomon between the two eyes ; the almond shape circumscribing star and eyes is that of the brazen vessel of the *Lemegeton* (or "Little Key of Solomon.")

19 See Luc Benoist, *Art du monde* (Gallimard : Paris, 1941), p. 56.

20 *FW* 299 : 8 ; cf. 206 : 35 where it follows a reference to Casey's Euclid and precedes an allusion to the inter-lock of aeons.

21 Wendy O'Flaherty has shown the obvious relationship in Shiva myth between the intertemporal eye and organs of generation (*Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva* [Oxford University Press : Oxford, 1971], pp. 247-50). Aramaic tradition relates *luz* to the *os coccyx*, the 'nut' of the spinal column ; see *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk and Wagnalls : New York and London, 1944), 8 : 219. Cf. the mythic burial of the two ends of Osiris's spine.

22 Greek lexicography assign the delta as the symbol for the female.

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## INDIAN-WESTERN LITERARY RELATIONS

### PROBLEMS OF PREVALENT PARADIGMS AND PARAMETERS

HWAPAN MAJUMDAR

The East-West literary relations—or to bring it within slightly manageable limits: the Indian-Western—are phenomena indeed too complex to lend themselves to a summary treatment. To say that it involves a more complex and fathomless matrix of relationship than the Euro-American model is capable of covering, is not a claim at all tall for its province. In addition to exchanges in literary principles and practices it precludes and at the same time precipitates a cultural confluence evincing value orientations constantly throughout. Keeping in mind the needs of the imperialistic expansion of Europe, it becomes perfectly understandable why a John Stuart Mill was motivated to propose essential differences between Pure and Modified Fatalism.<sup>1</sup> Neither is it difficult to make out what Maurice Maeterlinck intended while formulating his famous distinction between the Eastern and the Western 'lobes'.<sup>2</sup> Nor are Kakuzo Okakura's counter-blanks on East-West understanding wholly unintelligible.<sup>3</sup> Attempts at canonization of the East and the West on several bases ranging from fatalism to a psycho-social process or an inversion of the point of view attending on a power-dominated indignation of it, let the syndrome be complete in all respects. Besides the fact that they had given their ideas a spatial identity these were also attributed a value preference by them. Consequently as soon as we apply these concepts borrowed from allied human experiences, to literature, a priority seems to get latched onto these. But could these be all that simple to be explained away in terms of love and hate or adulation and servility? Is the West merely a geographical nomenclature or is it a value sign independent of it? Had the former been true, the Islamic contacts should have generated a comparable relationship; but it did not, why? If the latter is favoured, the Islamic ethos lays no less claim to the making of the fabric of Indian vision. But contrary to all logic we popularly equate the West with Europe and that too of the post-Industrial Revolution period. Even then, did all the modern literatures in India respond to the western stimulus on the same frequency level whether in respect of time or that of space? How would one ascertain, then, the permanent contents and the temporal mutations in a living literature being drawn on with almost equal intensity by age-old tradition and now fangled technology simultaneously? The weakness of such arbitrary compartmentalization however is revealed through the chain of answers

in the negative admitting no exception whatsoever. Yet the West constitutes a valid referent for us Indians from the 13th century onwards because of a very peculiar extra-literary situation popularly known as colonialism. The concept of literary relations renders a convergence of understanding necessary, as contrasted to, influence studies where a preference does exist in favour of the emitter. When the British orientalists discovered the 'Indian Shakespeare' in Kālidāsa, or Bankim was called the 'Scott of Bengal' or Tagore the 'Shelley' by their own countrymen, these no doubt were epithets used as tributes though these now smack of colonialist collaboration. But even in cultures that did not undergo the compulsive situation of colonial subjugation, during the transitional passage from the Classic or the Romance literatures to the Modern, authors were often nicknamed after the old masters : a Goethe was known as the 'German Propertius' on account of his Roman elegies, while as insignificant a poet as Friedrich Manso was considered a German counterpart of Ovid for his *Die Kunst zu Lieben* (1794) in the perspective of the late 18th-early 19th century. And such fashioning of names however were not always without a grain of truth. Parallels with very few alterations, if at all any, would attest to their direct borrowings.

In fact, what seems to be a diversity in points of departure or in schools with regard to influence aesthetics, does not presuppose any animosity as such among them and would hold propitious for the different stages of its growth or for various personality types of authors as the case may be. In this way, the French or the American schools do not really cancel or even contradict each other either as a methodology or else in the final findings. If we scrutiny the growth of the influence paradigm in the annals of any literature coming into contact with others ever since the Industrial Revolution, we would find that the design as well as the dimension of it has undergone distinct changes. Of course, the three stages discussed below did not follow a chronological pattern of progression as a rule, on the contrary depended mostly on the reciprocal relativity existing between the amount and pressure of influence received on the one hand and the flash and flourish of originality of the recipient on the other. The congeniality of time determines the third dimension of this relationship.

During the primary phase of such relations resonances were easily traceable, and authors on their part thought it discrete to make such parallels transparent ; or to put it otherwise, they considered themselves glorified in

being able to tie their names with the illustrious predecessors whom they loved, admired and imitated. In these instances, so overwhelmingly immediate and massive had been the shock of strangeness mingled with a sense of discovery that impact flowed from a text or an author to one of the either leaving barely any room for the display of originality for the recipient. They had no other option but to commit their involvement without letting it descend into the level of recollection in tranquillity. Obviously the application of the French method would have yielded the best results in such a context. But as contacts began to grow intimate and associations go deep down, tangible forms began to assume a tangential direction. Rather than direct borrowings these were cases of emulations. Significations were so opaque that signifiers were deliberately concealed leaving only a hint at times by virtue of which it was, again, difficult to pretend either that it could be altogether an independent work of art. The correspondence now was one of myth to myth, pattern to pattern or motif to motif. The author's role here underscores a game as it were of finding a perfect replica strong enough to withstand the bearing of the imports. Such acts of creativity call for the French as well as the American methods for their assessment—the former for the ignition period of influence and the latter for the evaluation of the residual. There may still be a third cluster of literary relations that can hardly be borne out by factual contacts, where aesthetic validity alone brings two authors or else texts to a point of comparison even irrespective of temporal incompatibility either way. In such instances influences may not at all be pinned down to the vocabulary, design or pattern of a text, but the entire atmosphere it creates seems to have been permeated all the while by the aura of a distant author and a different clime. The main thrust of the American school is on exploring such cases of aesthetic relativism.

Even though the American comparatists are in for a relativistic influence aesthetics, their theories continue to be Eurocentric and a resistance seems to have nestled in them against cultural relativism. It is precisely at this point that the Third World nations fall out of the purview of their theories. The position taken by Mr René Wellek, the doyen of comparative literary revivalism in America after the Second World War, may be cross-examined here as a representative one. Averse to the idea of cultural relativism and treating it as an extra-territorial activity trespassing on the sacred area of literature, Mr Wellek promotes his concept of 'perspectivism' as a possible antidote to the former. For him<sup>4</sup>

Relativism reduces the history of literature to a series of discrete and hence discontinuous fragments, while most absolutisms serve either only a passing present-day situation or are based ... on some abstract non-literary ideal unjust to the historical variety of literature. 'Perspectivism' means that we recognize that there is one poetry, one literature, comparable in all ages, developing, changing, full of possibilities.

Such a mechanical idea of "one literature", perhaps an extension of Woodrow Wilson's "one nation" theory, would have met the same fate as did the League of Nations. Secondly, as we move from the conceptual aspect of literature to the appreciation of it, such an assumption turned into a premise would inevitably call for one and a singular set of critical tools as '*The Tools of Trade*' in literary understanding. And these are obviously the western ones – so very much undisputed for this historian of criticism that he hardly feels the urgency or even the necessity of mentioning any corps of critical canon adequate enough as a system by itself beyond the confines of smug Euramerican complacency.

Mr Wellek's condemnation of relativism as "an anarchy of values" however has not a little abated since 1949 – the year of publication of the *Theory of Literature*, and since the publication of *Concepts of Criticism* in 1963 all the way undergoing as many as eleven reprints till date, strikingly without any alteration of position in keeping with the changing horizons of the international literary domain. Mr Wellek still maintains and reiterates his deterministic convictions in unequivocal terms<sup>5</sup> :

Our whole society is based on the assumption that we know what is just, and our science on the assumption that we know what is true. Our teaching of literature is actually also based on aesthetic imperatives, even if we feel less definitely bound by them and seem more hesitant to bring these assumptions out in the open. The disaster of the 'humanities' as far as they are concerned with the arts and literature is due to their timidity in making the very same claims which are made in regard to law and truth.

Had Mr Wellek curbed his enthusiasm for similar rights as a matter of claim for litterateurs, infected perhaps by the instance of the authority the semioticians and the scientists command in western society, he would have found that no peremptory writ could ever be issued in the commonwealth of literatures.

The concept of cultural relativism, nevertheless, has not emanated primarily on the strength of literary experiences, but has been like most of the modern idioms of literature borrowed from the anthropological methodology of cross-cultural readings, in particular from Ruth Benedict's epoch-

making *Patterns of Culture* (1935) and subsequently refined by semioticians like Jan Mukarovsky (1936) and the Prague school up to Roman Jakobson (1960) and Jurij Lotman (1977), finally to be inducted to the study of CL by Professor Douwe W. Fokkema in 1972, further formulating his stance in 1984. Yet Professor Fokkema seems to be rather uncertain and in two minds about its ultimate possibility<sup>6</sup> :

... the ideal of cultural relativism should be respected – although it never can be fully realized, since its unqualified application to epistemology would prevent us from analysing the otherness of a foreign culture and it is precisely that otherness which provides the condition for meaningful communication.

If he believes, as he declares quoting Lévi-Strauss in the same essay, in the oneness of the human mind and capacities, how does the question of "otherness of a foreign culture" at all arise ? Though Professor Fokkema may be free from Euramerican superiority complex, he is still not rid of the unnatural categorization of 'major' cultures and hence by implication of minors as well in communication situations with regard to differentiating texts according to their forms and functions. Thirdly, the dominance of power factor in inter-cultural literary relations, especially those of colonialism, manifest in some period or the other on all the continents outside Europe, has strangely bypassed – maybe not as a matter of commission – his notice.

These lacunae, I think, had already been covered by Professor Itamar Even-Zohar of Tel Aviv in his adoption of the polysystem paradigm. His theme being the most comprehensive one known to me I take the liberty of quoting him in extenso<sup>7</sup> :

Just as an aggregate of phenomena operating for a certain community can be conceived of as a system constituting part of a larger polysystem, which, in turn, is just a component within the larger polysystem of "total culture" of the world community, so can the latter be conceived of as a component in a "mega-polysystem", i.e., one which organizes and controls several communities in history, such "units" are by no means clear-cut or finalized for ever. Rather, the opposite holds true, as the borders separating adjacent systems shift all the time, not only within polysystems, but between them. The very notions of "within" and "between" can not be taken statically. Such an approach as the static a-historical approach in general, has been a major obstacle in the adequate understanding of the various historical facts. ... Literatures which developed before others, and which belonged to nations which influenced, by prestige or direct domination, other nations, were taken as sources for younger literatures. As a result, there inevitably emerged a discrepancy between the imitated models, which were often of the secondary type, and the original ones,



as the latter might have been pushed by that time from the center of their own PS to the periphery.

Besides the main area of focus, his theory also takes care of the problems of translations as agents of mediation in a constantly changing national polysystem as also against the proclivity towards, what Jean-Marie Carré called, 'mirage' formation, that is, the illusion one national culture assumes in the literature of another. The only point which may be appended to the observation is one of the dimension and proportion that influence aesthetics assumes when the situation is reversed in the sense that an older culture gets overpowered by a much younger one, as it happened in the case of Indian-Western literary relations.

Cultural relativism does not as a matter of fact feel scared of taking differences existing between alien literatures into its fold. As Lévi-Strauss has shown : "Differences are extremely fecund. It is only through difference that progress has been made."<sup>8</sup> Pushed to an extreme during the early periods of contact, it develops into a progress paranoia when the new is always taken granted for the better, the unique for the improved. Such value shifts also leave an impact on the terms of reference of critical methodology. In Indian literary scholarship—criticism as well as historiography—most of our relation studies, let us accept without any prejudices, are virtually readings in reception counter to the sources which should have been in all probability the centre of our observation. Studies in literary relationships still may very well be made taking into account the mutual receptions alone of two or more literatures leaving aside influence studies altogether as both paradigms ultimately move, work and interact, as Jurij Lotman brings out, in the direction of the "aesthetics of identity" as well as of an "aesthetics of opposition".<sup>9</sup> That is why encounters, however imperfect these may be, are apt to generate a power and power a motion on both the ends. It was nonetheless out of such irresponsible reciprocations that literary relationships delved into an exchange of fabricated patterns of strangeness. In Indian literature there was a good deal of paucity of knowledge about western living and consciousness, as much as the West lacked in a balanced empirical knowledge of the eastern realities. And both in that way had indulged in a sort of wish fulfilment in their respective literatures. The archetypes of the wise men of the East, seductive women making advances of love, down to an over-crowded underfed population of beggars naggingly chasing a western tourist or the image of the western man as a libidinous creature,

ambitious and greedy or the member of a religious order as an embodiment of selfless love and service, continued for long to be the most recurrent characters in Indian and western fiction and dramas alike. The commonplace idea of a competitive, iniquitous, materialistic and rational West contrasted with the evasive, lethargic, mystical and spiritualist East nevertheless had to give way to a computerized reduction of man in terms of a quantum of energy contained in a module.

In this changed perspective, should Indian and western and for that matter inter-cultural literary relations as a whole be compared only as vehicles of universal human essences, or simply as structures coded and decoded by two distant senders and receivers across an "étalon-language"<sup>10</sup> operating as it were within a restrictive semantic field completely immune to the drags of traditions and conventions? Such attempts at averting misunderstanding at the expense of the very suggestiveness of literature would be like derobing the Muse herself. Dialogues with traditions, if they could still be run, too, are not always eliminative appendices of culture. It cannot be denied that the possibilities of misunderstanding displayed by the West in receiving an Indian/Eastern author/text happens to be more in comparison with those of his Indian/Eastern counterparts; because an average educated Indian by now is well conversant with the western parameters used in critical judgment and understanding, whereas the western man is woefully unaware of eastern poetics. As the recent tendencies in literary criticism and history show, it would certainly have been beneficial for them to know this developed yet discarded corpus of knowledge. The closeness of the *ṭīkā* commentary and the *explication de texte* or the role of the reader in *Rezeptionästhetik* and the concept of a reader as a *sahridaya* could have saved much of their effort meaninglessly spent in duplicating what had been essayed centuries ago. The predecessors' failures too would have enlightened their mode and method of research.

In fine, the time has come when artificial concepts such as the one of the East or that of the West are to be done away with. Now with the emergence of the Third World nations to power, constructs of the first and the second 'world's are about to be reoriented. The technological power with which the image of the West had so far been inextricably associated happens to find its new home in Japan which again has upset the very stances of relationships between the East and the West. India too is not lagging far behind. And what has occurred in the world of technology would, we presume, be repeated in the world of letters before long.

## NOTES

1 "Real Fatalism is of two kinds. Pure or Asiatic Fatalism ; the Fatalism of Œdipus, holds that our actions do not depend upon our desires. Whatever our wishes may be, a superior power, or an abstract Destiny, will overrule them, and compel us to act, not as we desire, but in the manner predestined. The other kind, modified Fatalism I will call it, holds that our actions are determined by our will, our will by our desires, and our desires by the joint influence of the motives presented to us and of our individual character." – John Stuart Mill. Quoted by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay as a motto for one of the chapters, but subsequently dropped by him, in *Kapālkunḍalā*, eds. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das (Calcutta : Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, 1380 BS), p. 98.

2 "The one here produces reason, science, consciousness ; the other yonder secretes intuition, religion, the subconscious. More than once they have endeavoured to penetrate one another, to mingle, to work together ; but the Western lobe, at any rate on the most active expanse of our globe, has heretofore paralysed and almost annihilated the efforts of other. We owe to it extraordinary progress in all material sciences, but also catastrophes, such as those we are undergoing today. It is time to awaken the paralysed Eastern lobe." – Maurice Maeterlinck. Quoted by Alex Aronson, *Europe Looks at India* (Calcutta : Riddhi · India, 1979), pp. 2-3.

3 "Shameful as it is, our impressions of neighbouring countries are mostly derived from European sources, and are naturally coloured with their interpretation, if not indeed intentionally distorted. The fearful fiction of the diplomat, the harrowing plants of the missionary, above all, the exuberant imagination of the literary traveller clothe the East in colours bizarre in their abomination, absurd in their inhumanity....Do you not suspect that China lives on horrors, that Turkey dwells on atrocities, that India sits in voluptuous torpor ?... But after all, what does the West know of the East ? The European's claim to Oriental scholarship is shadowy indeed ! Who in Oxford or Heidelberg can compete with a second-rate śāstrī in his knowledge of Brahminical lore ? Who of Berlin or the Sorbonne can compare with a third-rate mandarin in his grasp of Confucian classics ? There are in Europe erudite authorities on Japanese art whose data are the mottled talk of curio-dealers. There are in India famous critics on Persian poetry whose reputation is founded on the starving labors of "native" translators." – Okakura Kakuzo, *The Awakening of the East*, Collected English Writings, vol. 1 (Tokyo : Heibonsha Limited, Publishers, 1984), pp. 145-46.

4 René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1963), p. 43.

5 René Wellek, "Literary Theory, Criticism, and History", *Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven : Arctus Books 1963), pp. 17-18.

6 "Cultural Relativism Reconsidered", *Douze cas d'interaction culturelle dans l'Europe ancienne et l'Orient proche au lointain* (Paris : Unesco, 1984), p. 252.

7 "Polysystem Theory", *Poetics Today* 1 (Autumn 1979), p. 292.

8 Quoted in Fokkema, *op. cit.*

9 Jurij Lotman, *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, trans. Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor : Michigan State University Press, 1977), pp. 285-96.

10 See Fokkema, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-50.

# THE WRITER AS READER

MEENAKSHI MUKHERJEE

This paper attempts to discuss strategies of research rather than report the findings of research that has already been completed. Any study of Indian literature in the 19th century has to grapple with the fact of western influence—mainly English influence—and in order to trace this it is customary to go back to the crucial year 1835 when the English language became available to the middle class urban Indian male (English education was inaccessible to the Indian woman almost throughout the 19th century<sup>1</sup>) who went to school and college.

To a greater or lesser degree every language offers its own reading of life, expanding or delimiting the interpretation of experience by its existing range of diction, syntax and rules of grammar, and thus the possession of language becomes a step in the process of obtaining a world-view. Whatever be the initial compulsions for learning the language for the colonized people, English eventually provided for a certain class of Indians an alternative world-view in the 19th century, and the rest of Europe became only vaguely discernible through it.

The new world-view with its attractive though unfamiliar ideology was conveyed through specific texts that happened to be read by the early generations of English-educated Indians and which incidentally were accepted unconsciously also as paradigms of certain literary forms. To reconstruct this range of reading is not an easy enterprise because culture studies are generally more concerned with production processes than with consumption patterns. Histories of literature exist; histories of book publishing, or histories of education, however sketchy, may be available even in India where records are obliterated with greater abandon and carelessness than in most cultures. But a reconstruction of the history of reading is probably the most difficult challenge today for the person studying 19th century India. Yet it seems to me a very important factor in understanding the period, not only to determine direct influences, but also to analyze possible misreadings, which can be equally important in the interaction between cultures through literature.<sup>2</sup>

I would like to touch briefly upon four possible sources from which we can glean some knowledge about the range of English reading of the 19th century Indian, and I shall be thankful for suggestions about other sources which might elicit further information in this area :

One : Curricula

Two : References

Three : Translation

Four : Influences

*One* By curricula I mean an exploration of what were the texts actually being taught in schools and colleges. There was some uniformity in this in most of the British colonies and the texts transmitted through this process of formal education provide a common core not only for the Indian elite in the 19th century but also for other colonials like the Australians, Canadians, West Indians, and later the Nigerians and Kenyans.<sup>3</sup> Some work in this commonality is beginning to be done by scholars in the area designated as Commonwealth Literature. As far as I know, no one in India has done any study of the literature syllabi of the Madras, Bombay and Calcutta universities from 1858 onwards—the records of which might be still available in the dusty archives of these seats of learning, and might provide clues to our literary preconceptions today.

*Two* Beyond this list, which would necessarily be limited, we might get a slightly broader view of the range of reading from occasional references made in Indian language texts of the 19th century. Novels sometimes happened to mention the English books its characters were reading, autobiographies referred to the books that had influenced the writer, intellectual discourses used quotations from various western thinkers to reinforce certain arguments.<sup>4</sup> While literary allusions in such texts help considerably in reconstructing what was being read, one cannot assume that a book was not read just because it happened not to be mentioned. Any logician will testify that while proving a fact on the basis of evidence is a relatively simple matter, disproving something due to lack of evidence is virtually impossible. To take one example, Bankimchandra Chatterjee in his long essay in Bengali “Samya” (‘Equality’ 1873) mentions Rousseau’s critique by Voltaire and Proudhon’s comment ; he refers to the terms ‘Communism’ and ‘Fourierism’, talks about Robert Owen, Etienne Cabet and Louis Blanc, but does not even once mention Marx. Is this evidence enough to conclude that Marx was unknown to him and generally to Indians in the 19th century ?<sup>5</sup>.

*Three* The books actually translated from English into the Indian languages may provide a fragmentary ground-list of what was being read. I am

using the word translation in its broadest sense to include the whole spectrum – adaptation, imitation, parody, pastiche and plagiarism. Bankim in another essay, written in the form of a dialogue between an English educated husband and his wife who reads only Bengali (“Bangla Sahityer Adar”) makes the husband recommend books in Bengali translation that she should read in order to ‘improve’ her mind. The three texts mentioned – *Robinson Crusoe*, Watt on the development of the mind, and Dante’s “Chhayamoyee” (perhaps a Bengali poem based on *Vita nuova*) make a strange combination. These translations may have been currently available in Bengali, but it is also possible that in this imaginary conversation, conceived in the lighter vein, Bankim is mentioning titles that he would have liked to see translated.<sup>6</sup> More adaptations of western texts are to be found in India than actual translations perhaps because there already existed in the country a literary practice where re-telling the original rather than accurate rendering of the first text was the traditional mode of transferring it from one language to another. The two national epics of India have numerous regional variations, and the adaptation or retelling often resulted in unexpected new creativity. A similar process can perhaps be found in relation to western texts as well. Bankim’s historical novels might have owed some debt to Scott, but what matters more is that he fashioned a new kind of narrative that became immensely popular not only in Bengali, but got transmitted to other Indian languages as well. It is well-known how O. Chandu Menon based his Malayalam novel *Indulekha* (1889) – often regarded as the first novel in the language – on Benjamin Disraeli’s *Henrietta Temple* but ended up writing something that was totally indigenous and vibrant with felt life. In many such cases an incipient act of translation becomes an act of fresh creation.

*Four* Literary influences and intellectual borrowings are perhaps unverifiable as evidence, but are in some ways the most important source to find out what was being read and absorbed. An entirely new genre, the novel, might never have developed in India in the form it did, had it not been for the Indian writer’s exposure to fiction in the English language. That they read certain English novels more carefully than others gets implicitly recorded in the modes and narrative patterns chosen by them. Some other literary forms like the personal essay and the sonnet emerged in 19th century Bengal for the same reason and in 1869 someone called Harimohan Mukherjee wrote a book called *Lives of the Bengali Poets* the title of which alone testifies to the influence of Dr Johnson.

## I

Of these four sources of our knowledge of 19th century reading, translation and curricula are relatively more concrete as evidence, and can be discussed at some length. The fact that a particular book gets translated does not automatically prove its importance to the recipient culture because the reason why one text gets translated rather than others are many, and not all of them literary. Also, only a few of the translated texts finally get absorbed into the literature of the new language while others remain marginal and outside the mainstream.

For example, missionary enterprise made it possible for the Bible to get translated into many Indian languages by the early 19th century. But these translations did not significantly enrich the existing corpus of these languages possibly because the translators were either foreigners who had learnt the language recently, or erudite local scholars who were assigned the job. They were not particularly imaginative, hence the nuances and the poetic possibilities of the language eluded them. Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* seems to have been the second most popular translation project of the missionaries and by the mid-19th century at least five major Indian languages had different versions of this classic with local variations and modifications.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps for the same reason we find very little influence of this book on the major body of creative literature in these languages.

The second extra-literary factor in translation was the availability of a text. One cannot assume that everything written in England or Europe was accessible to the Indian reader. While serious non-fictional prose (Mill, Bentham, Herbert Spencer, Auguste Comte, Tyndall and Huxley) were available to the educated Indian, as we know from Bankim's long discourses in the journal *Bangadarshan*, Rabindranath's *Jibansmriti* and other autobiographies of the period, in the field of imaginative literature the Indian reader was very much bound by contemporary Victorian taste. Since John Donne or Henry Fielding were not read much in Victorian England, these writers were not part of the literary canon transmitted through the educational process. Young Rabindranath was deeply moved by Byron and Shelley, Tennyson and Browning. Michael Madhusudan Dutt dedicated some of his poems to Wordsworth. Francis Turner Palgrave, an official in the Education Department in England from 1855 to 1884 was in many ways responsible for shaping the poetical taste of Indians for many generations and his anthology *The Golden Treasury of Songs and*

*Lyrics* (first published 1861, second series 1896) exerted a steady influence even as late as the fourth or fifth decade of the 20th century.

The English education being given to the colonial was not quite comparable to what was being offered to the young Englishman at home where English literary studies were a second rate academic pursuit compared with the study of the classics in Greek and Latin. English literature was being exported as a substitute for classical intellectual fare to the classrooms of a consolidated Victorian empire and these overseas students were being given material that were easier to master and more useful for its capacity to teach the language as well as the values and social practices of English culture. The scholar from England who was not very well up in the classical languages could be let loose on these provincial people. It also ensured that the metropolitan person would not feel too threatened by the 'natives' gaining knowledge since they had controlled access to the secrets of a higher level (European/classical) culture which was regarded as the true fount of western civilization.

But English education triggered off unforeseen consequences in the minds of the imaginative Indians—far beyond the functional and utilitarian ends Macaulay had envisaged, certain English texts engendered unprecedented enthusiasm as can be seen in Rabindranath's recollection of his youthful reading when he was swept off his feet by the intoxicating verses of Shakespeare and Byron :

The frenzy of Romeo and Juliet's love, the fury of king Lear's impotent lamentation, the all consuming fire of Othello's jealousy, these were the things that roused us to enthusiastic admiration. Our restricted social life, our narrower field of activity, was hedged in with such monotonous uniformity that tempestuous feelings found no entrance : —all was as calm and quiet as could be. So our hearts naturally craved the life-bringing shock of the passionate emotion in English literature. Ours was not the aesthetic enjoyment of literary art, but the jubilant welcome by stagnation of a turbulent wave, even though it should stir up to the surface the slime of the bottom.<sup>8</sup>

Response to a text is conditioned by socio-cultural antecedents. Shakespeare or Byron certainly did not create such an overwhelming emotional turbulence in Tagore's contemporaries in Victorian England. The intensity of the Indian response arises out of the contrast between the existing world-view of the reader and that of the writer. Not only had a new language become available to the Indian elite it also uncovered new perceptions and introduced new values, including that of individualism — a concept not easily reconcilable with the hierarchical and role-oriented structure



of traditional Indian society – and for the reason exciting and heady. This might have been one reason why the Romantics particularly appealed to the early generations of the English educated in India and continued to exert their influence for nearly a century.

An Australian scholar has offered an additional reason for the colonial's special identification with the Romantics. "Their sense of melancholy at being held apart as mortals from the sublime ideal corresponds to the colonist's feeling of separation from his original social and natural milieu, as it also echoed the native colonial's growing awareness not only of being kept from the privileges of the ruling culture, but of alienation from his own indigenous roots as well."<sup>9</sup> This may not be exactly applicable to the Indian situation, but in a general sense the Romantic poet's rejection of the urban metropolis in favour of a rural provincial existence may have found an echo in the colonial's nostalgia for a lost pre-colonial past. It is hardly surprising therefore that the colonial world found a correlation with the metropolitan culture in the Romantics. Writers emulated them, appropriated their forms and style in a different language, and reinterpreted them in a different cultural framework. The Romantics' special appeal for the Indians may also account for the popularity of Walter Scott among the Indian novelists. One must remember that the curriculum emphasized the study of poetry, and the novel – except for texts like *Rasselas* or *The Vicar of Wakefield* – was hardly taught in class. Among contemporary novelists Dickens and Thackeray were undoubtedly read by many (though seldom translated); George Eliot and Henry James were not mentioned often. The major influence in fiction came from second-rate romance writers and Victorian bestsellers some of whom have since been forgotten in the land of their origin.<sup>10</sup> These writers also acted as the models for the first generation of novelists in India. Despite Georg Lukács' suggestion that the primary determinants of such influences are the literary requirements of the recipient culture, we have to recognize that in this case the issue was complicated by the existence of a controlling Victorian taste, unquestioning acceptance of British superiority and the material fact of availability. The reading habits of the British in India, both in the cantonments and the civil stations, may have to some extent decided what kind of fiction should reach these shores. The club libraries in every remote district town where the British officers were posted contained copies of the bestsellers of the time, as did the personal libraries of rich Indians who emulated the British in every respect. Even

a cursory survey of old libraries (of clubs and families) in India that go back to the 19th century surprises one by the uniformity of the holdings. More research needs to be done in this area before all these old books disintegrate or get sold as waste paper.

## II

India's first generation of novelists had hardly any access to Tolstoy, Flaubert or Melville. Rabindranath lamented in *Jibansmriti*, his autobiography :

Our minds from infancy to old age are being moulded by English literature alone. But other literatures of Europe, both classical and modern ... are not subjects of our study ; and so, as it seems to me we are yet unable to arrive at a correct perception of the true aim and method of literary work.<sup>11</sup>

In an essay written at the turn of the century the Marathi writer V.K. Rajwade expresses a simple regret :

Our literary scene abounds in popinjays who have found inspiration in the most trivial English writers like Reynolds ; and if some of them have dared to soar higher than Reynolds, they have just about managed to touch Mrs Henry Wood, Lord Lytton and other such common or garden writers. That has been the zenith of their achievement. If there happens to be a writer who has drawn inspiration from somebody higher or greater news of him has yet to reach us.<sup>12</sup>

Later in the essay Rajwade mentions Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Zola as examples of greater novelists who have not been emulated. Not many of Tagore's or Rajwade's contemporaries shared this sense of deprivation. With the exception of a polyglot like Michael Madhusudan Dutt and a few others who read French, the majority of the 19th century men—writers as well as non-writers—were content to accept English not merely as their window to the world, but as the highest manifestation of European culture.

## III

In an earlier work I have examined in detail how some of the 19th century novelists felt that in contrast to the life in India, characters in British novels that they read seemed to lead lives of infinite possibilities.<sup>13</sup> I was taken to task by a reviewer for having pointed this out. She said, "Were there really no sources, literary and non-literary that provided Indians with the ideas that life for a large number of British people, women and the working classes in particular, was also politically servile,

economically deprived and socially circumscribed ?”<sup>14</sup> This is a legitimate question today, when thanks to E.P. Thompson and others we have a clearer picture of how the working class in Victorian England lived. And there was no reason for the Indians even then not to know about industrial oppression from the novels of Dickens or Elizabeth Gaskell, the stifling of the imaginative women by society from the novels of George Eliot or Gissing. But in actual fact the 19th century Indian writers’ perception of England did not at all seem coloured by these negative images. Rabindranath’s admission about the liberating effect of English literature (quoted above) shows how one of the most sensitive minds of the century contributed to the ‘mirage formation’<sup>15</sup> process – that continued long after him. A large number of writers continued to contrast their own restricted and stagnant situation with the infinite possibilities open to the individual in western culture.

If their perception of what this culture was tended to be over-romanticized, that too was the result of the socio-historic situation in which they found themselves.<sup>16</sup> The circumstances were colonial, one culture proclaiming its superiority over another in political, technological, mercantile and various other spheres – and perhaps as a corollary in the literary sphere as well. The literature coming from England was sacralized and that is why it is necessary for us to know what were precisely the contents of this sacrament – what were the specific texts that added up to make the hallowed canon that conditioned the production of subsequent literature in India.

## NOTES

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1 It may be possible to use this as a clue to the fact that the literature written by women in 19th century India is different both in form and content from that written by men. Swarnakumari Debi in Bengali is an exception because she was well-versed in English literature.

2 The example of Baudelaire’s misreading of Edgar Allan Poe is well-known.

3 See Meenakshi Mukherjee, “The House and the Road : Two Modes of Autobiographical Fiction” in *Commonwealth Literature : Problems of Response* (London : Macmillan, 1981), pp. 148-64 for some discussion about the similarity of school curricula in Bengal and the West Indies.

4 Apart from the references in the essays in *Bangadarshan* and similar journals in different Indian languages and non-fictional discourse, other sources are also beginning to surface. For example Gobardhan Ram Tripathi, a Gujarati novelist (author

of the famous four-volume *Saraswatichandra*) and social reformer of the late 19th century left behind him a large number of diaries which have recently been edited and published. These are now a rich quarry for this kind of material.

5 In the discussion that followed the reading of this paper at Jadavpur it was pointed out that Bankim could not have read Marx in 1873 when he wrote "Samya" because most of Marx's writing was not available in English until the 1880s.

6 *Robinson Crusoe* is also mentioned in a Bengali autobiography written in the 1860s (published much later) by Kailasbasini Debi. She obviously did not know English—even her Bengali sentences are erratic in spelling and grammar, and it is likely that she was familiar with a Bengali version.

7 The Tamil translation of *The Pilgrim's Progress* appeared as early as 1793, the Kannada rendering in 1814, the Malayalam in 1845. The Assamese translation *Yatrikar Yatra* was serialized in the Baptist Mission periodical *Arunoday* which started in the 1930s. The Marathi version entitled *Yatrik Kraman* is said to have inspired Haba Padmanji's *Yamuna Paryatan* (1857), an early novel in Marathi.

8 From the English translation of Rabindranath Tagore's *Jibansmriti* (Bengali 1912), published as *My Reminiscences* (New York : Macmillan, 1914) (translator's name not mentioned), p. 181.

9 From an unpublished dissertation by Paul Sharrad, submitted to the Flinders University of South Australia in 1985.

10 George Eliot is mentioned by Swarnakumari Debi several times. The Victorian bestselling writers who influenced 19th century novelists include G.M. Reynolds, Benjamin Disraeli, Marie Corelli, Bulwer Lytton and Wilkie Collins.

11 *My Reminiscences*, p. 183.

12 Shanta Gokhale, "The Novel : Itihasacharya V.K. Rajwade", *Journal of Arts & Ideas*, 8, pp. 77-88. The original essay by Rajwade was first published in 1902.

13 *Realism and Reality : The Novel and Society in India* (Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1985).

14 Eunice D' Souza, *Indian Express*, 8th June 1985.

15 This term was referred to by Swapan Majumdar in the seminar where this paper was read. I have borrowed the term from him for its appropriateness.

16 Much greater exposure to the West in the succeeding century has not changed the situation substantially, only complicated it further.

# LITERARY RELATIONS BETWEEN KERALA AND THE WEST IN THE 19TH CENTURY

AYYAPPA PANIKER

1. Although Vasco Da Gama landed at Calicut of the Kerala coast in 1498 and the Portuguese kept their contact with Kerala till the middle of the 17th century when they were driven out by other colonizers from Europe, the impact of the Portuguese on Malayalam literature is minimal. The Portuguese who married Indians and set up small colonies around Cannanore, Cochin and Quilon constructed buildings on the western model, helped to strengthen the Roman Catholic Church, and introduced a form of dance drama using western stories known as *Cavittu Natakam*. St Francis Xavier is said to have translated portions of the Bible into Malayalam. The Dutch, who came later, retained their contact till almost the end of the 18th century, but could not leave any visible mark on the literature of Kerala. The French established a settlement in Mahe in Kerala in the 18th century, but this did not lead to any large scale contact between the literature of France and Kerala. The British, on the other hand, came in a big way and came to stay for quite long. By 1793 Malabar had been declared a province directly under the British. Travancore and Cochin came under their indirect rule. There were revolts against British hegemony, led by Pazhassi Raja in Malabar, who by employing guerilla tactics kept even the Duke of Wellington at bay, by Paliath Acchan in Cochin and by Velu Tampi in Travancore, who committed suicide in order to escape being captured by the British who later had to be satisfied with a public hanging of his dead body. By the first quarter of the 19th century the consolidation of British power was complete in Kerala. From then on till the present day, the influence of English had been continuously felt on the language and literature of Kerala.

2. Here I may venture into a theoretical speculation about cultural encounters. When two cultures come into contact, there are three possibilities : one, total negative response from one to the other, which may lead to no fruitful interaction—something like this seems to have happened when the West knocked at the doors of China in the early centuries ; two, total surrender, or take-over by force, as seems to have happened when Europeans came to colonize North America. This leads to the disappearance of one of the cultures more or less in toto ; three, resistance and renaissance in which there is active interaction, even resistance being

a form of active involvement and interest in the other — and this seems to be true of what happened in India, with slight variations in intensity in the different parts. (The story of this cultural resistance of traditional India has not been fully written : most English-educated historians are at least unconsciously influenced by the notion of the superiority of the culture the English brought. For instance, the kind of education that was in vogue when Macaulay wrote his Minute is often belittled.) Kerala had been exposed to outside influences from the earliest periods of history and therefore the resistance of native culture was perhaps not too strong. The Jews and the Arabs had familiarized the local people with other styles of living, and the superimposition of the Aryan over the Dravidian (which itself may have been an imposition over the aborigines) seems to have smoothed the relations between the Hindus and the Buddhists as between the Vaishnavites and the Shaivites. Christians had been in Kerala for centuries, long before the Portuguese and the Dutch came : the latter's arrival however led to the coming into being of new denominations. Tensions between castes and subcastes did not lead to major conflagrations until the new concept of the equality of all before the law became a reality. The first schools on the western model were started early in the 19th century. The London Mission Society had its first school established in 1806 ; the Church Mission Society had its school in 1815 ; the Government of Travancore established its first English school in 1834. Svati Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore (1813-47) seems to symbolize the first phase of this contact between Kerala and the British. A great promoter of learning and literature and a great composer in both South Indian and North Indian styles, Svati Tirunal started his career as a firm believer in the friendship of the British — so he established an observatory, a government press, an English school, a zoo etc, but as time passed he seems to have come to realize that the English were difficult to get along with, so he had to bear the anguish alone in his last days and died prematurely at the age of 33. His successors therefore made it a point to propitiate the British. The major stages in the absorption of English or western culture are marked by the following : the introduction of the western system of education, the teaching of English as a language and its use as a medium of instruction, the use of English for official purposes, the increasing contact with Europeans both in India and in Europe, the work of Christian missionaries, the establishment of printing presses, the starting of newspapers, the various socio-political changes inspired by

western ideas of philosophy, law, science and technology. The adoption of western styles of dressing and haircutting for men of western etiquette, and of western ways of greetings and addresses spread even to the villages.

3. It may be useful to divide the period of this western contact into three : *I. Up to 1880*—this is the period of Induction, *II. From 1880 to 1930*—this is the period of Assimilation, and *III. After 1930*—this may be called the period of Recovery/Consolidation. The period of Induction is marked by the beginning of several new things which are of western origin.

The first Malayalam book to be printed : *Samkshepa Vedartham* by Dr Clement, printed in Rome, 1772

The first Bible translation 1811 (4 gospels) ; 1829 (New Testament) ; 1841 (Old Testament)

The modernization of the Lipi (letters of the Malayalam alphabet) : 1819.

The first royal prince to learn English : 1820

The first English school started by the Government : 1834

The Observatory : 1837

The Government Press : 1839

The first text book in Malayalam : *Balachandran*

The first translation of a western classic (*The Pilgrim's Progress : Paradesi Moksha Yatra*) : 1845

The first periodical : *Rajya Samacharam* 1847 ; *Paschimodayam*, 1847

The first autobiography in Malayalam

The first history of Travancore

The first grammar on modern lines : Hermann Gundert, 1851

The first novel—*Almarattam*—a retelling of *The Comedy of Errors* : Oomman Philpose, 1866

The first dictionary of Malayalam : Hermann Gundert, 1872

The first history of Malayalam literature : P. Govinda Pillai, 1881

The first book on rhetoric : Fr Gerard, *Alankarasastram*, 1881

The first travelogue : *Vartamana Pustakan* : Parammakel Thoma Kattanar

The works of this period are mainly of historical importance. They

oriented an awareness and provided the foundation for what was to follow. The take-off for the 20th century was being prepared. The main developments were : the growth of the novel, of journalism, of new genres, of criticism, of translation.

4. The second period of Assimilation begins around 1880. The first novel by a Malayali on a Kerala theme is *Pullelikunchu* (1882) by Archdeacon Koshy. This novel reflects certain of the doubts and antagonisms that Malayalis entertained towards the Europeans.

[Example : There is a conservative character named Rama Panikkar who tells Kunchu Pillai, the title character, about the Europeans. It is an instance of Brechtian irony – unconscious self-irony :

“What do you know boy ? Do you know the origin of these white people ? Long ago, when Sri Rama went with his army of monkeys to fight against Ravana, many women there became pregnant through mixing with the monkeys. When Sri Rama came to know that, being reluctant to kill women, he put them all in a boat and pushed it into the sea. Because of the force of that push, the boat moved on and on until it reached an island. That island therefore came to be known as “Reached by force” (*Balal etti*). *Balal etti* means the land reached by the force of Sri Rama’s push. Now we abbreviate it to *Bilati*. Most of the white men consist of the children of these women. Don’t you laugh, Kunchu, this is the truth. Well, you ask those that are moving close to them whether genuine white people don’t have tails ?”]

This was intended, I believe, to ridicule the frogs in the well who looked at everything from their narrow conservative point of view. Rama Panikkar in the novel represents the view that was fast being replaced by what was becoming regarded as the more enlightened view which favoured and even insisted on, acquiring the benefits of western education. The first really great novel in Malayalam – *Indulekha* by Chandu Menon (1889) – was a plea for extending western education to women. In a letter to W. Dumergue, who translated the novel into English within a year of its first appearance, Chandu Menon explains the reasons for his writing the novel.

First, my wife’s often expressed desire to read in her own language a novel written after the English fashion and secondly, a desire on my own part to try whether I should be able to create a taste amongst my Malayalee readers, not conversant with English, for that class of literature represented in the English language by novels, of which at present they (accustomed as they are to read and admire works of fiction in Malayalam abounding in events and incidents



foreign to nature and often absurd and impossible) have no idea, and to see whether they could appreciate a story that contains only such facts and incidents as may happen in their own house-holds under a given set of circumstances, to illustrate to my Malayalee brethren the position, power and influence that our Nair women, who are noted for their natural intelligence and beauty, would attain in society, if they are given a good English education and finally – to contribute my mite towards the improvement of Malayalam literature which I regret to observe is fast dying out by disuse as well as by abuse. The book is written generally in the style of Malayalam which I speak at home with such Sanskrit words as I might use in conversation with an educated Malayalee...

The novel is thus a strong argument in support of the renaissance which was just beginning to take place in Malayalam. Particularly interesting is the balance sought between Sanskrit and English. Kerala Varma Valin Koil Tampuran, Kerala's supreme symbol of the Renaissance, in his introduction to his translation of *Akbar* into Malayalam (1894), says something to the same effect, but with greater reluctance :

There may be many who think that the preponderance of Sanskrit words is a fault in a Malayalam prose style considered by people like me to be acceptable to the Sahrdayas. If the description of an evening in the Badrinath Temple on the Himalayas such as given at the beginning of this story is to be pleasing to the Sahrdayas, there should be a grandeur of sound and sense suitable to that grand subject. Such a thing still remains to be derived from Sanskrit in Malayalam. At present books of a high standard fit to be taught in the higher classes of native schools are rare. If books in Malayalam are to be of a high standard, it is impossible without the help of other languages. But I have specially tried to avoid in this book using Sanskrit as some fellows have done unnecessarily and often wrongly even in improper situations, thinking that it will bring grandeur to their writings.

By the end of this period 30 years later, the impact of English was so overpowering that at least a few people thought that the time had come to call for *Swadeshi Sahitya*. P.K. Narayana Pillai, known in his time as *Sahitya Panchananan*, in his introduction written in English to a book of Malayalam grammar called *Kerala Paniniyam*, by A.R. Rajaraja Varma (1917), thinks aloud on this subject :

The introduction of English education with its steadily increasing influence on the Vernacular, marks the commencement of the second stage. At present, the attachment of our language is in full swing. Our prose literature is entirely fashioned on English literature. The new poetic spirit in our language is directly traceable to English models. Nay, the peaceful penetration of the English language, if not controlled to some substantial extent, menaces to dislodge our mother tongue even from our hearth and home.

5. By 1935 it was time to take stock of the impact of the West on our literature during the high tide of the Renaissance. In his critical work *Kavita Tatva Nirupanam* (A Discussion of Poetics) 1935, K.M. Panikkar reviews the progress :

There is no doubt that daily contact with a literature different from our tradition and its learning will provide our minds with new ideas and new ideals. Since substantial changes have been made by this contact with the West in our social relations and customs and in every aspect that concerns our life, it is inevitable that some such changes have to take place in our literature also. This is something that affects all the regional languages of India. Evidence for this may be found in Rabindranath Tagore and others in Bengal, Iqbal, Ghalib and others in Urdu and people like Subrahmonia Bharati in Tamil. The changes that are now taking place in Malayalam too as a result of this contact are not insignificant. Think of the change that has taken place in our prose literature. It is true that such changes have not taken place in our poetry. But my humble opinion is that it is because our poets have not tried so far to understand in full the real quality of European poetry. We cannot say now what changes will take place when the contact with European literature strengthens. New poetic forms and new metres are likely to come first, but changes in ideas will surely take place. Those things remain to be seen.

6. The fifty years between 1880 and 1930 proved to be the time of the greatest impact of English culture on Malayalam literature. It is often referred to as the Age of the Renaissance as well as the Romantic period. It is interesting to note that critics in Eastern Europe believe that the European Romantic Revival, also called the Oriental Renaissance, was the result of Europe's discovery of Sanskrit literature, and the works of Kalidasa, for instance, paved the way for a new model of apprehending reality, a reawakening of wonder, a new pastoralism and a reaction to industrial culture. The romantic renaissance in Kerala, said to be the result of western contact, also started with the translation of Kālidāsa's *Sakuntalam* into Malayalam – by Kerala Varma in verse and by Ayilyam Thirunal Maharaja in prose. The English authors most elaborately taught in the colleges also happened to be poets like Gray, Goldsmith, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, and our poets who became familiar with English romantic lyrics directly or indirectly fell under their influence. Kerala Varma was a classicist by training, but his *Mayura Sandesam* in 1894, although modelled on Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, has many of the features of a subjective lyric since the speaker of the poem who sends the message is the poet himself and the addressee to whom the message is sent is his own wife. The legitimacy of poetry as the spontaneous overflow of power-

ful feelings thus got established at the hands of "the dictator of letters" of the time. In the controversy over the traditional rhyme on the second syllable of couplets, he was on the side of tradition ; but he himself demonstrated his versatility by writing a whole *Khanda Kavya* in the rhymeless style. This was followed by a series of lyrics and elegies by A.R. Raja Varma, V.C. Balakrishna Panicker, Kumaran Asan, Vallathol Narayana Menon, Ulloor Parameswara Iyer and Nalapatt Narayana Menon.

7. While in poetry big strides were being taken by the poetic trio, Asan, Vallathol and Ulloor, there were parallel developments in prose drama and fiction. Chandu Menon wrote two novels, *Indulekha* and *Sarada*, both bearing the full impact of the West. C.V. Raman Pillai wrote three superb works of fiction : *Martanda Varma*, *Dharmaraja* and *Ramaraja Bahadur* between 1890 and 1920. He also wrote a social novel, the first satirical novel in Malayalam perhaps, called *Premamritam* in 1915. During this period – the first decade of the 20th century – C.V. also wrote a number of plays modelled on the western farce, satirizing the follies and foibles of the townbred in Trivandrum who aped the English. He also acted in some plays of Shakespeare in Malayalam translation. For several decades after that, realistic or romantic prose dramas on historical or social themes continued to be written and staged in the towns. The Victorian stage decor was also brought to Kerala by Tamil companies located at Madras which fell under the influence of the Parsi theatre of Bombay, which in turn was apparently a replica of the English Victorian stage. The search for an indigenous theatre of the roots is a recent reaction against this westernized theatre.

8. Looking back at the Renaissance which is said to have marked a synthesis of the Indian tradition and western modernity one can at this distance of time identify what was healthy and what was not so healthy in this great encounter. Contact with the West helped to liberate us from the medieval strangle-hold – not only in literature but perhaps in social, political and economic fields too. In this process, it is possible to argue, we also lost our sense of values, our capacity to think for ourselves. Instead of quoting the Puranas or Manusmriti, we now started quoting from British Parliamentary practice. After 1930 we have learned to look beyond England into Europe, after 1947 into Africa and Latin America. But large parts of Asia are still unknown to us. World literature

still means to most of us the literature of Europe. This imbalance requires to be rectified.

9. To sum up I shall try to highlight a few problems faced by the student of Indian Renaissance :

(a) It seems there was some kind of awakening throughout India during the 19th century which can be called renaissance, though not in the same sense as meant by J.H. Cousins or Sri Aurobindo, but it was uneven in its progress. Swami Vivekananda in his lecture on the East and the West said long ago : "Italy was an old nation. At the call of the Renaissance, she woke up and gave her response, but only to turn over on her side in bed, as it were, and fall fast asleep again. For various reasons, India also stirred up a little at this time. For three ruling generations from Akbar, learning, wisdom, and arts came to be much esteemed in India. But India was also a very old nation ; and for some reason or other, she also did the same as Italy and slept on again." Swamiji said that about what happened in the 16th and 17th centuries. But has the same thing happened in the 19th and 20th centuries too ? There is thus this hypothesis of the unfinished renaissance in India.

(b) Secondly, it seems, in content and quality, the response to the western impact was not the same throughout India. The Bengal renaissance, if I may say so, was chiefly led by the upper classes and castes. In Kerala, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra, perhaps there was an awakening from the grassroots. Dr P. Palpu, Sri Narayana Guru, Kumaran Asan, H.V. Ramaswamy Naicker and Mahatma Phule came from the lower ranks. Both Narayana Guru and Asan were great poets, writing in Sanskrit and Malayalam. Changes among the upper classes received an impetus from the movement first started among the lower classes. To this day the leaders of the untouchables believe that the learning of English had something to do with their emancipation. Demands for English medium schools for the education of the untouchables are voiced by the Itzhava and Harijan leaders in Kerala. It would be interesting to note if there are parallels for this in other parts of India. In the South there was a certain Dravidian thrust in the social reform movements and literary renaissance. Asan wrote his later poems about social reform and Vallathol about Gandhiji and the struggle for freedom in Dravidian metres practically unused by scholar-poets for two centuries.

(c) The conflict between tradition and modernity was a marked feature of the Indian renaissance. One aspect of this conflict is to be seen in the resurgence of Indian language literatures. If during the Bhakti movement in the middle ages, the regional languages came forward to replace Sanskrit, in the 19th and 20th centuries they came forward to take the place of English. The strength for freedom was carried on in a very large measure in the regional languages. The progress of Indian language journalism during the period is remarkable from this point of view. The growth of prose literature—essays, criticism, short stories and novels—in Indian languages could be related to this development, and we could check whether this is true of all regions.

# 19TH CENTURY GUJARATI LITERATURE A STUDY OF ITS CONTACT WITH WESTERN LITERATURE

NITANSHU YASHASCHANDRA

The relationship of Gujarati literature with English literature in the 19th century should be looked at within the parameters of total literary relations of Gujarati literature before, during and after the period in question. This, it will be seen readily, is different from viewing it in the context of total socio-political relation of India and England. The difference between these two ways of observing Gujarati-English literary relations, permits us to distinguish between history in general and history of literature, and hence, allows us to study certain autonomous forces, trends and movements of literature which may, at times, not quite correspond to (and, at moments, be in conflict with) the larger movement of history of the land. Thus, in short, the method of study chosen here prompts us to emphasize the creative and autonomous, rather than reflective and dependent, nature of Gujarati literature in its relation to a) English literature and b) social, economic and political forces of the period in question.

The literary relations of Gujarati literature from its origin in the 12th century, have been of two main types : a) Relations across its linguistic area but within a comparable 'cultural' field (either in space or in time) ; b) Relations across its linguistic area and outside the limits of a comparable 'cultural' field (either in space or in time).

The association of Gujarati poetry with a pan-Indian movement like *prema-lakshana* bhakti exemplifies the first type of relation. Let us take an example of the second type of relation from within the body of medieval Gujarati bhakti *kavita* itself, so that the use of the term 'cultural' here is defined clearly. Among the poems of love for Krishna which Narasimha Mehta (14th/15th century) composed, there is a group of poems called 'Jhurina Pado' (i.e. lyrics of the water-pitcher). In these *pada* poems, he describes Krishna as a beautiful woman (*mohini*, of the *samudra manthana* myth), had come to give water to the poet who is thirsty and dry-throated upon singing his Lord's glory long into night. These *padas* fall strikingly out of the unmistakable pattern of *prema-lakshana* bhakti which is seen in the rest of his poetry. Krishna is always the lover, the poet always a *gopi* ("purushatan maharu leen havu" – "my masculinity has disappeared", he says elsewhere). But here, in an isolated group of poems, Krishna appears as a beautiful woman, as a beloved. With reference to the *mohini* incarnation of Vishnu indeed there is nothing either in Narasimha's

total poetic work or in the earlier or later traditions of Gujarati bhakti poetry to promote us to observe that Narasimha's striking departure from his usual *sakhi bhava* has resulted from an influence of any tradition of the *samudra manthana* myth reaching him. The mere fact of existence of such a myth has no meaning in this context. What is operative here is an existence or otherwise of a link of 'history of literature'. Hence, we have to turn away from the *mohini* myth (though the poet has used the word *mohini* in the *pada* and would have us evoke that myth to grasp the image of Krishna-Vishnu as a woman), and seek a more valid cause for Narasimha's departure from the usual *prema-lakshana*. This we may find in a tradition existing strongly in his contemporary India but outside the 'cultural' field in which he wrote. This is the tradition of Sufism, in which God is seen as a beloved woman and the poet is the lover seeking him. While Sufism is outside the poet's 'cultural' field, there were numerous cross-cultural contacts between the two devotional traditions, Vaishnava and Islamic. This, then, may be an example of the second type of literary relation existing in Gujarati literature.

We may be tempted to classify Gujarati-English literary relations of the 19th century in the second category of relations, noted and exemplified above. It is better to wait and watch things more closely.

Let us skip the 19th century and look at contemporary Gujarati literature to observe the second category of its literary relations. An example which comes immediately to mind is that of the 'haiku' poetry. This Japanese genre of poetry has been transplanted into Gujarati in recent times by 'Snehrasmi' and other poets. This clearly is an example of Gujarati poetry's relation across its linguistic area and outside the limits of a comparable 'cultural' field.

The transplantation of the 'sonnet' into Gujarati, in the 19th century, would also belong to the same category as the 20th century transplantation of the 'haiku'—we might be tempted to say. But is it?

To get our answer, let us put side-by-side (not the sonnet and the haiku, but) the haiku and the Sufi image in Narasimha's poems. What is common to both?

At first we may not find much in common, excepting the fact that they both mark points of contact with a cultural tradition other than the one to which the poet of each belonged. But, if we watched more closely we may observe the fact that neither of the two has either resulted from or resulted into the central dynamics of the history of Gujarati literature.

Each arises at random and, as a random contact, remains in isolation of the main current of literature.

This, indeed, is not to say that all literary contacts outside the limits of a comparable cultural field are doomed to remain in isolation, as a footnote to the history of a literature.

Only that this brings us to two questions central to this study : a) What distinguishes the necessary relation of a literature with another (literature and, hence, sensibility) outside its cultural sphere (either out of its linguistic limits or, at times, within its linguistic limits but across some more subtle barrier), from a random relation ? b) How to classify Gujarati-English literary relations in the general two-fold scheme proposed at the beginning of this paper ?

Let us take the first question : What is a necessary literary relation, as against a random relation ?

The randomness of literary contact is not easy to define or pin-point. Should we define it in terms of 'influence' it exerts on the 'recipient' literature ? Should we, alternately, define it in terms of its 'relevance' to the social, economic and political forces of its contemporary linguistic area ? Both the criteria have some merits and cannot be brushed aside. However, the first has the fault of confusing 'necessity' with 'popularity'. The second contains the error of treating literature as a product rather than a process.

We could, however, understand the necessity (and randomness) of a literary contact in terms of its relation to a writer's sensibility. If a literary contact and ensuing relationship display a bearing upon his basic mode of perception of reality, it becomes a necessary (literary) relationship. Two more conditions would follow this first condition.

A necessary contact of a literature with another will bear relation to the central movement of the history of that literature. This is not the same as exertion of great 'influence' on the 'recipient' literature. By the central movement of the history of a literature is meant the core relationship which upholds as a cohesive whole the variations of perception and expression available in literary works of a given period and of the different periods preceding and following it. A necessary outer relationship of a literature with another is in harmony with the inner relationship mentioned above, of that literature.

Secondly, a necessary contact of a literature with another is not divorced with the social, economic and political history of the land, though it is by no means a passive function of such a historical process.



Finally, such a literary relation may be, for that literature, a necessarily good, a necessarily sad and a necessarily ambivalent relation.

The influence of western literature, through the medium of English language, on Gujarati literature, in the 19th century is often eulogized. As in other literatures of India, in Gujarati also the 'modern age' is supposed to have dawned with the contact with western literature. Authors have put claims on craftsmanship in introducing into Gujarati western literary genres such as the essay, the novel, autobiography-biography, the sonnet and so on. There is, indeed, a trend to write so-called histories of literature, with sections evaluating claims and counter claims to such honours of being first, also begins soon after. Finally, Gujarat joins the national race, often led by Bengal, run in the circular course of servility of colonial mentality. To justify the 'influence' of western literature, it is often pointed out that 'modern' Gujarati literature came about as a result of the changed political-historical situation in Gujarat. The Maratha misrule and the Muslim oppression ended with the advent of the British in Gujarat and, it is claimed, Gujarat celebrated the 'on-set of spring' through its new literature.

All this will have to be analyzed carefully and the true nature of this encounter (which indeed was a major event in Gujarati literature) be grasped in all its complexity.

To start with, it is necessary to distinguish the relation of Gujarati-western literary relationship with the general history of Western India (economic, political, social), and with the history of Gujarati literature.

This is because however great be the socio-political need of the day, literature of the land can enter a new phase only through a relation with the dynamics of its own history.

And in this lies the key to understand not only the nature of the first contact of Gujarati literature with western literature, but also the rhythm of the subsequent phases, till the present day, of Gujarati literature.

For, two important things happened in the first half of the 19th century : 1. Through the writings and public lectures/debates of such men as Durgaram Mahetaji, Dalpatram and, above all, Kavi Narmad, a decisive break was achieved with the past. But the break was hardly marked with a break-through in literary excellence. As Narmad has put it in his essay, "Gujarationi Sthiti" (the condition of the Gujaratis) : "English rule was established in 1800-18. After that the condition of Gujaratis began to change. People of Gujarat, who had been harrassed by the

children of the Mussalmans and the Marathas, and were hiding in a corner, and who had also been impoverished through natural calamities like floods and fires, saw the possibilities generated by the English rule and began to peep out of their corners." (*Narmagadya*, p. 113)

Narmad was a man of great personal courage and he pioneered many social reforms. He also participated in the English experiments in education. He writes, "In 1826 the Government opened schools and sons of the Brahmins and Banias began to study in these schools. In 1828 some [Gujarati] text books for these schools were brought out." (Ibid)

British civil servants ('Forbes Saheb', 'Russel Saheb', 'Bühler Saheb' as they were known) encouraged these new writers. In 1843 Durgaram Mahetaji and others established 'Manav-dharma-sabha' in Surat. In 1850, Mir Jafaralikhan and others (Parsi and Hindu merchants) established a 'Literary Society' and opened a library (Andrews Library) in Surat. In 1848 a 'Vernacular Society' was inaugurated in Ahmedabad. In 1851, a 'Buddhivardhak Sabha' was founded in Bombay. *Buddhiprakash*, a literary periodical was published from Ahmedabad and Dalpatram, Mr Forbes' protégé, took over as its editor in 1855. Another journal, *Buddhivardhak*, began publication in 1856 and a year earlier, in 1855, *Satyarthaprakash*. Surveying all this in his essay, Narmad wrote in 1858, "It is surprising the mind of our people who had remained stagnant for centuries, have begun to move so quickly in just two decades."

It indeed looked like a true renaissance. It was supposed to. It is only when we read twice or thrice the names of the societies and mandalis, the journals and the libraries, that the banality of it all stares in our face: *Buddhiprakash* and *Buddhivardhak*, *Satyarthaprakash* and *Manav-dharma* – the obviousness of it all suddenly comes into focussed contrast with the subtlety of expression one finds in poets of the so-called medieval period, from Narasimha to Dayaram. What was, really, going on in those twenty years of 'renaissance'?

At this point we must return to the classification of literary relations discussed earlier in this paper. What kind of literary relation was evolving here? Firstly, was it truly cross-cultural? Secondly, was it a 'necessary' contact or a random contact?

On the face of it, Gujarati-Western literary contact in the 19th century was a cross-cultural contact. Evidently, an Indian sub-culture was entering into a vitalizing relation with English (and ancient Greek through [English] culture).

But were these two cultures, really coming into a contact ? Was the English culture presented in a dispassionate way ? And, finally, was Gujarati literature present to receive it ?

Observed in the light of these questions, newer aspects of this relationship come into view. Thus, for example, upon Russel-Saheb's encouragement Nandshankar Mehta wrote the first Gujarati novel, *Karan Ghelo*, in 1866. But it was by no means a rejuvenation of the traditional narrative art of Gujarati language through contact with the new narrative art of western literature. *Karan Ghelo* had nothing to do with any of the narrative techniques developed in Gujarati literature over the past six centuries. It was, simply, a novel. It was a crude imitation of an English genre, with no roots in the history of the literature of the language in which it was written. It indeed marked a break with the past and was a kind of renaissance – only in order to be born afresh, it had to do away with a living past.

In short, in this literary contact prompted under the umbrella of a colonial power, one of the two sides, the so-called recipient, was absent. Gujarati authors were there, but there was no Gujarati literature, to come in contact with the western model. If it was a renaissance, it was a violent renaissance of a wonderful child produced by a father without the aid of a mother. It was, perhaps like Urvashi – “urudbhava nara-sakhasya muneh surastri”.

This literary relation started off with only one face : A colonial power prompting a newly ‘educated’ class of the society of its colony to participate in its own magnificent business of myth-making. On a larger scale the myth of ‘Pax Britannica’ was being created. As a resultant part of this enterprise was produced a renaissance in learning, literature and customs.

However, within a span of two decades a new face, a second face, began to grow upon the body of this motherless child. It was a feminine face, the miracle of restoration of the mother. In the second phase of the development of the Indian-Western literary relation, the first signs of contact of Indian literatures with their own past began to show. Today, this search is finally developing into a mature and conscious effort on the part of many Indian authors, including the best of contemporary Gujarati authors.

But what is happening today – the ‘necessary’, ‘non-random’ and creative relation of Indian literatures with large areas of western literature,

while maintaining the continuity of their own literary history – is culmination of the second aspect of the 19th century contact.

This second aspect involved a process of fathoming the colonizing culture and of introspection of the colonized culture. Fathoming and Introspection – these two processes mark Gujarati literature of the last quarter of the 19th century. This dual process has culminated in the epic-like novel (which, interestingly, was called a *purana* by another scholar of the period), *Sarasvatichandra*, by Govardhanram Tripathi.

We may conclude this paper with an illuminating comment which one of his minor characters makes during a discussion of the relation of native states of Gujarat with the paramount British power. He says : “The native states which will succumb to the British power will have the future of a beautiful woman captured by a man-eating *rakshasa* who prefers to enjoy her beauty to eating up her flesh.” (*Sarasvatichandra*, IV, p. 74)

# LITERARY ASPECTS OF THE ANGLO-MARATHI CONFRONTATION

BHALCHANDRA NEMADE

The impact of western culture through English on Indian society and the nature of the contact agencies involved therein have been variously studied by scholars in different branches of learning, especially in social sciences. The studies in the area of Indian acculturation of the 19th century have amply demonstrated that it is a phenomenon capable of multiple interpretations, from the historical-political-sociological to the literary-aesthetic. However, systematic response of literary scholars to this phenomenon has been rather inadequate, though the contact between India and the West was largely literary and textual and it is the 'English' education which has been chiefly responsible for the diffusion of western norms in the oral-folk-manuscript cultures of India. Several contemporary British educationists and statesmen compared the role of English in India to that of Greek and Latin in Europe during the late middle ages.

It is an admitted fact that the literary tradition of Indian society, despite its too well-known deficiencies, possessed an internationally recognized aesthetic system, which had manifested itself in a variety of literary movements, styles, cults and in the works of isolated literary figures ; whether in the ancient Sanskrit works or in the medieval works of the Bhakti movement or in the tradition of Urdu poetry exemplified by Ghalib and Momin. However, the changing national situation by the beginning of the 19th century, which marks the belated transformation of Indian society from the medieval to the modern, found the native aesthetic system to be inadequate and insufficient, and required a stimulus which it received from the West. After about two hundred years now we are in a position to review the overall effect of this culture contact of long duration on modern Indian literatures.

A study of such a contact presumes reconstruction of the specific processes active at the deeper level of society during the historical period of contact starting from a reconstructed base line consisting of the state of the literature antecedent to the point of contact. Since the confrontation of two languages neither occurs in a vacuum nor can be studied in a vacuum, the particular space-time dimension reveals specific phenomena at work. In this paper discussion is restricted to the shift of literary-aesthetic norms in Marathi literature as a result of the confrontation between English and Marathi.

In the Indian literary tradition a clear division can be said to have existed between written and oral cultures. Writing was by no means unfamiliar to the people, but oral culture was consciously encouraged for various social and political reasons, the chief being the fact that reading and writing were the privilege of the upper castes. In Maharashtra written culture was more or less prosaic, discontinuous, elitist, courtly, fluctuating in respect of its uses and users, and deeply influenced by alien or artificial *supraglossia* such as Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian and after 1818, English. On the other hand, the oral culture was more or less poetic, continuous, proletarian, rural and comparatively standardized in its uses.

Since the advent of English learning fostered by charitable Christian missions and Benthamite officials of the East India Company, prose has become the symbol of new learning and new values. The transition from the oral to the written and from manuscript to print culture proved to be an avalanche of new literary and aesthetic norms. A general feeling that a new age was beginning to dawn upon the wretched Hindus was vigorously propagated by the first generation of writers whose natural choice of expression was prose modelled on English style. Since English prose is particularly conducive to judicial argument, order and balance, the great virtues of rationality consciously developed by post-Restoration English writers, several prose genres such as the novel, essay, satire, humour, biography, tragedy, comedy and literary criticism, replaced in a stroke the essentially lyrical-antirational verse medium of the Marathi tradition. The intellectual link between the creative writer and society came to win over the purely emotional link that had dominated the tradition for over six centuries. Poetry, the central ethos of the creative spirit, became a minor form of writing, and under the influence of English models it has never discovered its identity.

Since all educational institutions were started with a view to transforming the Hindu view of life, dominated by the *karma* theory and regulated by absurd dharmashastras and outdated arthashastras, English linguistic imperialism became absolute and all-round, and penetrated deep into the structure of Marathi, giving little scope to revival of old forms of expression in the oral tradition of the language, which continued to be active in the illiterate masses. Introduction of printing and the consequent growth of periodicals and printed books greatly increased the flow of ideas from one centre like Pune to the rest of Maharashtra a phenomenon, unprecedented in history, of imposing the aesthetic norms of the few on

the many. This has had the most disastrous effects on the sociology of Maharashtra. In a large microminority country like India the most stable elements of literary culture are those evolved by large ethnic groups over centuries and the twin principles of autonomy and decentralization are fundamental to our world-view. However, the narrow aesthetic ideas of a small nation-state like England, which were the legacy of equally small polities like Greece and Rome, began to dominate our broad structural concepts distorting the writers' very conception of reality.

The literary-aesthetic system of a society when under pressure from a dominant system, transforms the outer norms into the inner subsystems and integrates the borrowed elements with the native structure. The strength of a tradition is therefore vigorously tested in such contact situations—the weaker subsystems are fossilized and the stronger ones are expanded to their capacity. In Marathi, this process took about three quarters of a century—to be exact in three subsequent phases : (1) the first recognition of the confrontation and acceptance of the superiority of the alien language (1818-1847) ; (2) bilingualism leading to borrowing followed by interference and change in the native systems, along with the emergence of new norms (1847-1874) ; and (3) consolidation of the new norms (1875-1890). It must be admitted here, that the above-stated process is more elaborate and complex than the way it is presented here for the benefit of non-Marathi scholars of literature. However, special mention may be made of a parallel stream of nativistic movements—non-linguistic, linguistic, semiliterary and literary. When under the pressure of large-scale borrowing from English several native subsystems were found to be eroding, a consciousness characteristic of a culture whose identity is undervalued during a period of contact took several forms of organized rebellion against English norms. Several terrorist uprisings, the National Congress, the Widow Remarriage Association, educational institutions, the press and periodicals and literary activities reviving the past tradition—all this shows the assertion of a nativistic spirit in multiple ways. There has been a strong nativistic tradition of prose writers including novelists in Marathi since the very first generation of English-educated Maharashtrians began writing in 1830s.

It is interesting to note in this context that the increase in English borrowings led the purists to borrow more from Sanskrit—a typical defence mechanism developed during this period. As a result, Marathi had never been more Sanskritized than during the period of English influence. How-

ever this indiscriminate substitution of loans at the semantic level damaged the rhythm of the literary language to such an extent that it has never regained it except in the works of illiterate, rural or low-caste literary artists like Bahinabal, Madgulkar and Mahanor. This is quite expected in a large-scale confrontation—enrichment in one subsystem inevitably causes degeneracy in another.

The British vowed to modernize every other social system of Indians except the economic one—a paradox of utilitarianism. This created serious anomalies especially in literary representation of reality. In such a colonial situation, a tendency grows so as to accommodate the artist's social environment to the borrowed structures of literary works rather than the structures to the native environment. A literature of fantasy develops in which advanced western ideas are yoked to the under-developed economy. Solutions to fictional problems are stage-managed rather than creatively inspired. It is for this reason that metropolitan centres alone can become the locale of most Marathi novels up to 1960. The individual in contrast with society is a western concept wherein individuality is stretched to the full. Hindu ethics and social structure does not permit this relationship, hence the struggle between the individual and society in the post-1818 literature is more entertaining than disturbing. Western individualism minus its social responsibility has become particularly attractive to our poets and fiction writers, because it helps them freelance their literary devices of promiscuous sexual behaviour, sex adventures and adultery themes into commercial successes.

The lag between the borrowed value system and the backward native subject matter creates a strange kind of unreality. Our literature abounds in love romances in which grown-up unmarried young man and women are found courting each other when our social reformers heatedly debate over the age of consent to be 12 or 14 during 1890 and 1927. The European 'love triangle' became a common motif in our fiction while in reality there exists the family polygon of the wife, children, mother, father, brothers and sisters and the helpless husband. Unless the paraphernalia of the western capitalist system like hotels, bungalows, cars, seashores resorts, meeting places, privacy, enough self-earned money in the purse etc support the man-woman relationship, such love themes reach the level of fantasy, conceptualizing the freedom our leaders cannot realize in the actual life of poverty, unemployment, dowry and the tedium of the routine. This trend has been rampant in the Marathi novel since *Muktamala* (1861)



and has always side-tracked the novel of social realism begun with the first Marathi novel *Yamuna Paryatan* by Baba Padmanji (1857). Between the two, there has been a spate of ethnocentric historical novels of revivalist themes, which pride in glorifying false Maratha history. This also explains why the decadent Sanskrit works of Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Daṇḍin and Subandhu are more popular than the old Sanskrit classics in the official critical canon of Maharashtra. The Marathi theatre modelled on the English dramatic tradition with the three unities and the divisions of the plot into five acts and numerous meaningless scenes, has only recently recognized the more creative treatment of time and place in our traditional folk theatre. Poetry however shows a brighter record of continuity of tradition, despite a heavy influence of English models.

This discussion is not aimed at reducing the importance of borrowing in acculturation. It is intended rather to point out how English aesthetic norms have come to destroy the rich aesthetic systems in India which were evolved by large ethnic groups over centuries. It is also intended to support the hypothesis that incoherence in literary and aesthetic systems has created serious stylistic problems of national relevance. What preserves the arts is the continuity of their systems. The British and western aesthetic norms, conventions in performance and appreciation of art have broken this continuity to the 'bewilderment' of all Indians. The new conventions borrowed from English soon alienated the writers from their own aesthetic tradition. Under the influence of English, literary art was identified with social communication of a written type and the entire aesthetic system was modified by means of adaptation at a very high rate—700 years of western experimentation came into our literature within 150 years, as if in a nutshell. A large proportion of European and English aesthetic forms were borrowed and adapted along with their original contexts in Marathi prose and verse. For example, a Pune writer (1895), in his preface, compares conceited readers to the princes gathered at Penelope's court in Ithaca. Another Hindu writer, lamenting the death of his beloved daughter, writes in 1865 :

Particularly when it is to be considered that in my peculiar position as a Hindu  
I cannot even erect a homely tomb over her lamented ashes as a poor symbol  
of my mournful affection.

More subtle comparative standards contributory to the western norms can be discovered in the literature written in the following years—the

most ridiculous example being the entire body of Indian writing in English. There is more reason to worry because we have not yet realized the fact that expansion of literary systems does not necessarily mean progress.

Perhaps the real strength of the Indian acculturation is being tried in our capacity to find sustenance in our roots, in the multitudinous strands of our native culture, in how we win over this prolonged orientation towards social awareness and social action – the most formidable spiritual value of European Christianity that the Hindus found most indomitable – because the Hindu tradition has never come across anything so noble in its interminable history. The broad face of the bicultural confrontation has now tapered off to our recovery of our spiritual confidence.

# THE WEST AND THE RENAISSANCE IN ORIYA LITERATURE

BIYOT KESH TRIPATHY

Let me, at the outset, briefly outline the history of Orissa. Perhaps some of us will see connections between this stereotype and the stereotype of literary history, if such connections exist.

Not much is known of the early history of Orissa, but it was an empire powerful enough to be mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and is one of the few places in this country where a strong mahābhāratic culture survives with the worship of mahābhāratic deities. Later, in historical times, it was large and powerful enough for Ashoka to invade so that Kharabela had to conquer Magadha to recover it. At its largest it extended from Karnata and Kalabarga in the south through Utkala to Gouda in the east and Magadha in the north.<sup>1</sup> But from the 3rd to the 8th centuries AD it began decaying and territories were clipped. The medieval period saw first the rise of the Saivaite kings from the 8th to the 10th-11th centuries consolidating the empire. From the 10th-11th to the 13th century Vaishnvaite kings dominated. Gradually the kingdom grew weak and was pluralized. Then began a period of incursions and invasions which brought diffusion through cross-cultural contacts. Islamic invasions came during the 16th-17th centuries followed by Maratha incursions during the 17th-18th. Western culture-contacts started with the coming of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English in the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The modern period in the history of Orissa may be said to begin with the coming of the Europeans to Orissa. When the British pushed forward the Dutch left Balasore. On December 3, 1803, the Marathas signed over their titular holding of Orissa to the East India Company. Orissa was at this time divided into several principalities overlorded by a weak Mukunda Deba with headquarters at Puri and Khurda. In 1803 Mukunda Deba was defeated politically and militarily. There were some counter-revolts but these achieved little: the soldiers' revolt of 1817; the Ghumusar revolt of 1832; and the Sambalpur revolt of 1857.

Let us now look at the process of modernization in education, for this was the positive aspect of the culture-contact and brought new responses to life and literature in Orissa. The first phase may be taken to be the period leading up to 1820. During this period the missionaries based at Serampore (Bampton, Pegs, Campton, Sutton, Lacey, Box, Carey, Marshman, Ward and Buckley), were not only thinking of modernizing education in Orissa but also were rapidly absorbing the new culture, its

systems, and language. They met pressures from Bengalis to ignore Oriya and introduce Bengali as the language of instruction. But the missionaries had been serious and unbiased students. They put on record their belief that Oriya, far from being the primitive dialect that the Bengalis wanted them to believe, was perhaps the most developed among eastern Indian languages with a sizeable literature of its own of fair ancestry. They continued firm in their belief that Oriya should be the language of instruction in this tract.

The second phase of education begins with the help of the missionaries with the establishing of fifteen modern vernacular schools beginning from 1822. Sutton wrote five text books : *Oriya Grammar*, 1831 ; *Bidyasagara*, 1832 ; *Moral Science*, n.d. ; *History and Geography*, 1839. Soon teachers of Oriya took up the task. Biswambar Bidyasagara wrote *Oriya Byakarana*, 1841 ; and Mohan Prasad Thakur wrote a dictionary : *Ingraji-Oriya Abhidhana*, 1841.

In the meantime Macaulay's education policy came in 1833, followed closely by the Woods-Despatch in 1834. The first 'English School' was established at Puri in 1835, followed six years later by another at Cuttack. Things were coming slowly as most of the allocations went to Bengal which exerted a strong pressure. In 1845 Lord Hardinge had to insist on giving Orissa eight schools out of one hundred and one for the Bengal Presidency. In 1868 the famous Ravenshaw College came into existence growing out of the Cuttack Charity School at the instance of T.E. Ravenshaw. By 1870 there were ninety-six schools in Orissa (fourteen English and eighty-two vernacular). An educated middle-class conversant with western art and ideas was gradually establishing itself and was beginning to define a new identity for itself. As an expression of this came a number of literary journals in Oriya, starting with *Dipika* in 1866, followed by *Muktika* in 1868, *Utkala Darpana*, *Utkala Putra* and *Bideshi* in 1873, and *Utkala Madhupa* in 1878. A strong national identity was emerging and this was hastened into full consolidation by a strong 'Abolish Oriya' movement launched by the Bengali bureaucracy as a last ditch do-or-die measure. It was in the late 60s that this assault was launched and it was in instant reaction that a strong Oriya cultural movement started bringing with it the beginnings of modern literature which was for it the renaissance.

Let us pause here and briefly examine the native literary tradition available to the Oriya. The puranas were translated or transcreated between the 8th and 15th centuries. During the 16th-17th came the *Rama-*

*yana* and the *Mahabharata*. During the next two centuries came riti poetry, with Upendra Bhanja exploring every richness of the language mixing native nuances with the Sanskrit roots. Also during this period native forms of poetry emerged : romances, champu, chhanda, janana, and dramatic forms like pala and tamsa. Thus, by the time of the renaissance there was already a strong native tradition in literature.

As we enter the renaissance we find that prominent literary figures were not many ; Radhanatha Rai and Madhusudana in poetry, Fakiramohana Senapati in fiction, Gopala Praharaja in non-fictional prose and Ramashankara in drama. There were of course about a dozen others who formed the milieu, but there was great distance between them and the leaders of the field.

While all the genres were the products of western influence permeating a rising national spirit, some like poetry were more deeply influenced in structure, spirit and content than the others. In so far as drama was concerned there were native dramatic and quasi-dramatic forms in tamsas, jatras and palas, but plays in acts written for a proscenium stage came only during this period, first with Parischa of Paralakhemundi and then in a more sustained way with Ramashankara. But the roots were with the Elizabethans rather than with the moderns, with Shakespeare rather than with Shaw or Ibsen ; but then Ibsen was just about getting known in England and Shaw had not started writing. Robertson and company were probably unavailable. So Shakespeare. But these plays did not borrow in depth and had little vitality of their own except *Banabala* which was based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Likewise, essay as a form became a convenient form of cultural communication and journals played their part, but there were no in-depth borrowings or influences on these essays except that of the Addisonian tone and stance which Gopala Praharaja adopted and the Pattern of Holmes's "Breakfast Table" essays that Praharaja used in his "Bhagabata tungi" essays. This is the lone strong American influence.

The novel form gave Fakiramohana Senapati a great vehicle. Already there was emerging in folk literature a form of prose narrative framed by a sadhu-storyteller and a picaro-listener in *Abolakara Kahani* (stories for the disobedient). Thus the native comic satiric frame mixed well with the 18th century English tradition of Fielding, Sterne and Smollett and in no mean way with that of Dickens of *Pickwick Papers* to give Fakiramohana his voice and form. In comic spirit he is Fielding, in satire he is Sterne, in characterization he is Dickens, and in randiness he is Smollett. Not

even a second English novelist can be as close to Dickens in creating typical comic characters as Fakiramohana is. And in creating villains he also looks fondly at Shakespeare (Pujari, 58-59). But then the similarities end there, for Fakiramohana's world was his own native Orissa and fortunately his plots are entirely his. The vitality of his native genius firmly entrenched him in fertile native ground. While he was so fully a product of the English tradition of the novel, his genius was so great that he stood out among his peers as unique with no followers who could emulate his feat even up to our times.

We must now turn to poetry in which the western influence was the greatest. Lala Jaganmohan Rai may be taken to be the prime ancestor of the poets like Radhanatha, Madhusudana, Gourishankara, Pyarimohana, as also of Ramashankara, Manicharana, Sadhucharana, Gopalaballabha, Chandramohana and Reba. Gopalaballava Das (1860-1920), indicated in "Konarke Usha" that with the coming of the British a new age was dawning and that this nation should become at one with the world. Among the many of his generation mention must be made of Nandakishora Bala (1875-1928) who continued the international connections.

The first important contribution of the western impact was the liberation of form. Although native forms had emerged during the last two centuries they were adequate only for romances, mythological themes and certain variety of religious sentiments. While the exposure to European epics, romances, ballads, odes and elegies led to the sophistication of native forms, a radical transformation took place with exposure to lyrics whose flexibility and variety made it suddenly possible for the poet to express a wide range of transient thoughts and feelings, which, otherwise, he could not have expressed. As during the Renaissance in England, from Wyatt and Surrey through Spenser, Sydney, Shakespeare, Donne and almost all the others, in Orissa also a special fondness was expressed for the sonnet, that lyrical form of great charm and formal dignity mixing freedom of expression with rules of rhyme, rhythm and stanzaic identity. Not only did leading poets like Radhanatha and Madhusudana use it but almost all the poets who wrote in the various journals of the period used it. Madhusudana was the master of this form and gave it its name, "chaturdaspadi". Earlier it had been called "chatuspadi" and the first one was, perhaps, Rudranarayana Patnaik's "Rama", published in *Sambada Bahika* of November 16, 1872 (Nayak, 249-50). Madhusudana's *Basanta Gatha* (1901) was the first sonnet-sequence in Oriya. The ode was used by Radhanatha

and Madhusudana as well as Nandakishora, while the elegy was exploited by Madhusudana, Fakiramohana, Gangadhara and Nandakishora with fair mastery. The ballad came with Jaganmohan Lala's translation of Parnell's *Hermit* as *Bhramabhanjana* (1868), blown by Ramashankara's *Pre-matari Gatha* (1878) which was based on Goldsmith's *Edwin* and *Angelina*. The form connected easily with the native tradition of narrative poetry. Radhanatha, Fakiramohana, Nandakishora and Balabhadra Deba used the form well. The western epic was brought to Orissa with Radhanatha's *Mahajatra* (1892) which takes up the story of the Pandavas' last journey and is written with the inspiration of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Spenser and Milton, with the last being the most potent. *Mahajatra* triggered other works of the kind (Nayak, 287-90). But then, the lyric was the most popular form of all, not only because it brought such freedom to poetic expression and legitimized brief poetic statements but also because it was so suited to the magazine. Every poet who wrote during the period used it as his fondest, often the major, vehicle of poetic expression.

Along with the borrowed forms also came a variety of forms of versification which were adapted readily and without difficulty because styles of versification were already fairly sophisticated in Oriya as a result of the exploration of *riti* poetry. The new forms, therefore, were just variations that the poets found no difficulty in handling. Madhusudana used the Spenserian stanza with facility in "Nishithara Chinta", the rhymed couplet in "Akashara Prati", and terza rima in "E Sruti Arutamaya he". Radhanatha used blank verse in *Mahajatra* with distinct Miltonic echoes tempered with Michael Madhusudan Dutt. The various styles of the sonnet were explored by the poets fully. Formal units were also adopted eagerly. While the idea of the couplet, terset, quatrain, sestet and octave were borrowed, the quatrain became the most popular formal unit.

While the formal influences of the West were considerable, the major points of contact and diffusion, however, were thematic ; and here, the range is stupendous. The following tables will document the facts graphically. The tables are not exhaustive but are fully representative, and are meant to serve as examples and have been presented so that the situation is analytically and graphically presented to bring out clearly the various kinds and levels of western connections in terms of time, culture-difference and depth. Western influence for the Oriya Renaissance is not merely English but embraces the whole range from the Greeks to the contemporary English and American.

First, let us look at the ancient connections.

Table 1 : Greek Connections

Greek Works	Connecting Factors	Oriya Works
Sophocles <i>Oedipus Rex</i>	Incest theme	Radhanatha <i>Parabati</i>
Aeschylus <i>Agamemnon</i>	Incest Theme	— <i>Parbati</i>
Homer <i>Iliad &amp; Odyssey</i>	Character of Electra	—
	Meliager & Hypomenes theme	— <i>Usha</i>
	Pyramus & Thisbe myth	— <i>Kedara Gouri</i>
	Myth of Laurel	— <i>Chandrabhaga</i> (See table of individual works)
	Character of Aphrodite	— <i>Usha</i>
	Invocation	— <i>Mahajatra</i>
	Character of Electra	— <i>Parbati</i>
	Verbal echoes of Achilles following Hector	— <i>Chandrabhaga</i>

Table 2 : Roman Connections

Latin Works	Connecting Factors	Oriya Works
Virgil <i>Aeneid</i>	Invocation	Radhanatha <i>Mahajatra</i>
Ovid <i>Metamorphoses</i>	Pyramus & Thisbe	— <i>Kedara Gouri</i>
	Atlanta	— <i>Usha</i>
	Phoebus & Daphne : the Laurel myth	— <i>Usha</i>
	King Minos & Scylla	— <i>Nandikeswari</i> (See table of individual works)
	Verbal echoes	— <i>Usha</i>
Dante <i>The Divine Comedy</i>	The journey motif	— <i>Mahajatra</i>
	Lament for childhood beloved	Madhusudana "Paraloka Basili"



The tables present analyzed data that need little explication. But it must be observed here that the projection is in terms of major works only – epics, ballads and romances – which serve as sufficient examples ; minor works show only similar tendencies. It may also be noted that the major sources of classical contact are fairly representative of those literatures : Greek drama and epic ; Latin epic, mythic source-books, and medieval romances. And it may be observed that the major contact-man with the classics is Radhanatha Rai.

Let us now turn to English literature a contact with which has been analyzed and tabulated century-wise.

Table 3 : English Connections

English Works/Authors	Connecting Factors	Oriya Works
<i>16th-17th Centuries</i>		
Spenser <i>Faerie Queene</i> , sonnets, lyrics	Spenserian stanza Verbal echoes	Madhusudana “Nishithara Chinta” Radhanatha <i>Chillika Mahajatra</i> –
Shakespeare <i>The Tempest</i> <i>Hamlet</i> <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> <i>Othello</i> etc	Plot & Characters Incest-idea Pyramus & Thisbe love theme Villains	Ramashankara <i>Banabhaal</i> Radhanatha <i>Parbati</i> – <i>Kedara Gouri</i> Fakiramohana : Novels
Milton <i>Paradise Lost</i> , <i>Paradise Regained</i> , early poems	Invocation & verbal echoes of <i>PL</i> Nature poetry	Radhanatha <i>Mahajatra</i> – Scattered
<i>17th-18th Centuries</i>		
Dryden <i>Absalom &amp; Achitophel</i> etc	Tone	} Radhanatha <i>Darabara</i> – “ – <i>Chandrabhaga</i>
Swift <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> etc	Mode & symbolism countries	
Pope <i>Dunciad</i> IV “Windsor Forest”	Framework Pan pursuing Lodona	

Fielding : Novels	Comic sense & plot	Fakiramohana : Novels
Sterne : Novels	Social satire	— ”
Smollett : Novels	Roguerie	— ”
Cowper <i>Alexander Selkirk</i>	Adaptation & trans- lation	Madhusudana “Nirbasi- tara Bilapa”
Gray <i>Elegy</i>	Verbal echoes	Nandakishora <i>Palli</i>
Goldsmith <i>Deserted Village</i>	—	<i>Chitra</i>

### 19th Century

Wordsworth	Nature poetry	Radhanatha, Madhusu- dana, Gopalaballabha, Chandramohana, Sadhu- charana, Sachidananda, Nandakishora
	Child & nature theme	Madhusudana “Nabajata Sishu”
“Written in Early Spring”	Nature Poetry	— <i>Basanta Gatha</i>
		— “Sankhadhwani”
Coleridge	Nature & thought	— “Basantara Bhabana”
Shelley	Nature poetry	Radhanatha <i>Chillika</i>
“To a Skylark”	—	Madhusudana “Hridayara Sangita”
“Hymn to Intellect- ual Beauty”	Verbal echoes	Radhanatha <i>Chillika</i>
Scott, <i>Lady of the Lake</i>	Ideas, structure, verbal echoes	— <i>Chillika</i>
Keats “La belle dame sans merci”	Ideas, verbal echoes	Madhusudana “Joubanara Swapana” & “Shobha”
Byron “Siege of Corinth”	Characters & structure	Radhanatha <i>Nandikeswari</i>
<i>Childe Harold</i>	Verbal echoes	— <i>Chillika</i>
Tennyson <i>Maud</i>	—	— <i>Usha</i>
“The Brook”	Verbal echoes	Madhusudana “Nadiprati”
Browning	Ideas & verbal echoes	— “Jara Akramana”
Morris “Atlanta’s Race”	Verbal echoes	Radhanatha <i>Usha</i>
Swinburne “Olive”	Verbal echoes	Madhusudana “Nabajata Shishu”

The tables give examples of the kind of contact Oriya literature established with the West and the range of the contact that triggered the renaissance. The tables do not document the data exhaustively since these have been done in two books (Nayak and Pujari q. v.), do not list minor writers, works and do not document translations which have been tabulated by Pujari, but they present analyzed data carefully chosen as examples so that the nature of the western influence is presented without any distortions in terms of range or emphasis. Certain facts begin to emerge through the data. First, the range has been fairly broad, starting with the Greeks, running through the Romans and drawing upon the best since the English Renaissance and even Chaucer,<sup>2</sup> delighting as much in romantic material as in that from the age of reason, hunting with equal felicity among the classical as among the new voices. It shows the nature of a culture that was merely ready and eager to absorb new spirits but one that responded equally to the complete range of diversity that western literature had attained in its development ; this is the second fact. The third factor is the depth of contact which was not superficial, of form and style, but of spirit and thought as well. At the deepest level the fusion this culture attained between classical mythology on the one hand and Indian mythology and local history on the other was astounding, so much so that when Radhanatha converted the legend of Pyramus and Thisbe into that of Kedara-Gouri it was instantly accepted as indigenous and ancient. Not only does the Oriya of today accept it as native but also associates the Kedara-Gouri temple of Bhubaneswar with it ; a film in Oriya was made on the subject in the 60s testifying to its popular appeal and acceptance. This illuminates our understanding of the creation and transplantation of myths and legends in a culture and provides strong argument for the acceptance of the inter-cultural nature of myths. Similar is his creation of the myth of Chandrabhaga from the legends of love-pursuit and transformation, involving gods and maidens which are plentiful in Greek mythology : Daphne and Castalia pursued by Apollo ; Syrinx and Pitys pursued by Pan ; Arethusa pursued by Alpheus. Such was the depth of understanding that even culture-blocks were overcome so that inhibited material was transferred.

This may be recorded as the fourth factor. Radhanatha's *Nandikeswari* (1887) depicts the love of a princess for an invading king, her betrayal of her father, and her rejection by her lover. The story has little historical basis. The four histories available to Radhanatha (Stirling,

Hunter, Pyarimohan and Beams) do not provide any basis in historical fact. Yet the poet successfully creates a story which has been readily accepted into the folklore of Orissa, derived mainly from Ovid's episode of "King Minos and Scylla" superimposed with Byron's "Siege of Corinth". More radical is the same poet's *Parbati* (1890) where he deals with incest between father and daughter at a time when Freud was beginning to draw his conclusions and was not yet widely known even in Europe, far from being known in India, and when the first conservatively Oedipal literary work in England—Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*—was to come twenty years later. Here, however, Radhanatha roots the story in facts he dug up in *Madala Panji* (Mohanty, 23): "This Gangeswara Deba... asked Brahmins whether or not one could eat of the fruit one sowed. The Brahmins replied to this that one could do so. Thereafter the king mingled his body with his daughter's. The daughter became pregnant." (translation mine) While in this fact Radhanatha found native ground to create, the inspiration clearly was from Greece, from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* from whom he extensively borrows ideas and lines (see Nayak, 124-34). It is also clear that in broad terms the poet's reading of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* would have confirmed in his mind the idea of incest as a reality, even at a time when such an idea was not yet discussed with reference to the last work. It goes without saying that Radhanatha's depth of understanding of reality at an archetypal level was astounding as was his genius in converting the material to Oriya folklore so completely. Needless to say, this work provided opportunity for lesser men like Nilakantha Das, later on, to launch attacks on Radhanatha in the name of the 'purity' and 'goodness' of native culture. One can only say that they were lesser men whose moral zeal was matched only by their puny moral understanding of human culture and behaviour. Radhanatha was a genius. Such men are rare and appear far between. A Sophocles or an Aristophanes, a Chaucer or a Shakespeare, a Bhanja or a Radhanatha do not appear every day and are sometimes far ahead of their times.

While the other writers of the period showed the influence largely of English poets, Radhanatha's roots were in the classics of Greece and Rome as well as of England. The two following tables will document the nature of this connection in respect of the major body of his writings and in respect of some individual works so that the nature of his use of the material will be clearly brought out.

Table 4 : Single Author : Radhanatha Rai

Radhanatha's Works	English Works	Classical Works
<i>Chandrabhaga</i> 1886	See projections on individual works	
<i>Nandikeswari</i> 1887	—	
<i>Usha</i> 1888	Morris "Atlanta's Race"	Ovid "Hyppomenes and Atlanta", <i>Metamorphoses</i> Bk X* ; Homer <i>Iliad</i>
<i>Parbatī</i> 1890	Shakespeare <i>Hamlet</i>	Aeschylus <i>Agamemnon</i> * Sophocles <i>Oedipus Rex</i> Homer <i>Iliad</i>
<i>Chillika</i> 1891	Scott "Lady of the Lake"* Byron <i>Childe Harold</i> Shelley "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", "Ode to the West Wind" Keats <i>Endymion</i> Wordsworth "Daffodils"	
<i>Mahajatra</i> 1892	Milton <i>Paradise Lost</i> * Spenser <i>Faerie Queene</i> Byron <i>Childe Harold</i> Tennyson "The Passing of Arthur", "The Lady of Shalott" Macaulay "The Battle of Lake Regillus", <i>Lays of Ancient Rome</i>	Homer <i>Iliad</i> Virgil <i>Aeneid</i> Dante <i>The Divine Comedy</i>
<i>Jajati Keshari</i> 1894	Shakespeare <i>Cymbeline</i>	
<i>Darabara</i> 1896	Dryden <i>Absalom and Achitophel</i> Pope <i>Dunciad</i> IV Swift <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> Byron <i>The Vision of Judgment</i>	

The table seeks to bring out clearly the range and variety of literary contact between Oriya and the West in terms of a single author. It will be in order now to tabulate the nature of the use of material in respect of individual works as example.

\* Indicates major source.

Table 5 : Complex Connections of Individual Works.

Oriya Work	Aspects of Connection	Western Works	
		English	Classical
Radhanatha <i>Chandra- bhaga</i>	The myth/story  Characters : Arkadeba Chandrabhaga (daughter of sea nymph & hermit) Scene of pursuit of love by a god of a nymph/ mortal Verbal borrow- ings	Pope "Windsor Forest" Pan pursuing Lodona Pope <i>ibid.</i> Tennyson <i>Maud</i>	Ovid "Apollo and Daphne" <i>Metamorphoses</i>  Apollo/Phoebus Daphne (daughter of river Pe- neus & Poseidon).  Ovid Apollo pursuing Daphne Ovid <i>ibid.</i> Homer <i>Iliad</i>
Radhanatha <i>Nandike- swari</i>	The story/myth and situations  Characters : Subarna- keshari Nandike- swari Chodaganga Deba Utkala Chandika Verbal borrowings	Byron "Siege of Corinth"  Minto Princess Alp Vince Byron <i>ibid.</i>	Ovid "King Minos and Scylla" <i>Metamorphoses</i>  Missus Scylla Minos Migar Fates Ovid <i>ibid.</i>

The two works show different kinds of ways in which western material was used. In the first the myth of pursuit was borrowed and localized. Apollo becomes his equivalent sun-god Arkadeba or Surja. Daphne, the daughter of a sea-god and river-spirit, becomes the daughter of a hermit and a sea-nymph, a better innovation explaining her beauty as well as her apathy

to sex. The locale, here, becomes the area of Konarka where the temple of the sun-god is situated and where the vanished Chandrabhaga used to flow out to the sea. So masterly has been this transference that people going to the non-existent Chandrabhaga for a dip in thousands on Magha *saptami* see the stretches of sand and pine and think of the helpless maiden's lonely run chased by the charioted sun-god. In characterization there are some parallels but Radhanatha's differ in important ways. In situation only one has drawn influence : this is the pursuit scene. Here Ovid is as much the inspiration, being the chief model, as Pope's "Windsor Forest" with Pan pursuing Lodona with like intentions. As far as verbal borrowings are concerned, Homer, Ovid, Pope and Tennyson provide several lines and passages which have been either translated or used as kernel-ideas. But let it be stated clearly that these are quantitatively minor components, the major part of the poems being the poet's own creation. Radhanatha's contact with the western material is archetypal, in the deep reaches of the psyche and culture, and he creates a parallel text rather than an adaptation. *Nandikeswari* illustrates this. The situations are simultaneously modelled on three sources. Even the characterization derives from two sources, Ovid and Byron. At the same time the parallel of the Greek siege of Troy is used on Homer's model. The diversification of source only goes to show that what is created is no translation or adaptation because such activity can only operate on the basis of textual integrity or identity of the original material which is destroyed here by referring out to multiple texts. And the language roots it entirely to the Oriya tradition with an inalienable completeness so that we can see Sarala Dasa, Upendra Bhanja, Balarama Dasa, the chhanda and the champu through it. What Radhanatha has done is to create another text in the inter-text of several literary traditions.

As we are beginning to see the nature of the western influence on the Oriya renaissance it must be observed that often in verbal borrowings great men like Radhanatha or Madhusudana have created as great poetry, sometimes even greater, as Fakiramohana has created in fiction or Prahara in the essay. Let us look at a few examples. Keats says :

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

Its loveliness increases, it will never pass into nothingness.

Radhanatha easily creates superior lines which have become memorable in Oriya, easily eliminating the prosaic argumentation of the second line. He says in *Chillika* :

Sundare truptira abasada nahin  
Jete dekhuthile nua dilaithal.

The last lines of Wordsworth's "Daffodils" he creates afresh with his own ideas :

Sansara niraye anga dei dhali  
Karibi ehaku srutira sankhali.  
... ..  
Abasade aba atma bismrutire  
Budenahin mana tora ramya tire. (*Chillika*)

He expands, improves upon, and makes his own Shelley's "But mine is dealt with another measure" :

Chhara bhagya mora pihita pasane,  
Mo jibana gatha anya upadane. (*Chillika*)

The last line has become a popular idiom that every rebel, dissenter or sufferer utters today. Likewise, Shelley's "I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed" is matched by "Chiradina dukha prahare jarjara". Let us look at an inter-text of Ovid and Radhanatha. Ovid's "for both their hearts/with equal flame did burn" (192), becomes "beni hrudare kharatara hoi jalila priti anala" (*Kedara Gouri*). Ovid's "Her running made her seem more fair" (156), becomes "palayane puni sundari dise sundaratara" (54). Let us look at some other poets. In Madhusudana's hands the opening lines of Keats's "La Belle" become :

Sahasa dekhili puni chamaki palake  
Sodasi sundari murti sammukhe mohara  
Shobhita anana padma lalita alake  
Sarbage padichhi suvra rashmi sasankara.

("Joubanara Swapna", *Granthabli* 169)

Coleridge's "Life is but thought/So think I will/That youth and I are house mates still" become modified into "Anaina bare dekhare jiba ! nija antare/Ananta jibana adhara satya siba sundare" in Madhusudana's "Naba Basanta Bhabana" in *Kusumanjali*. While it is clear that the poets freely shaped the kernel-material into their milieu and their thought rooted in native philosophy, Madhusudana was more archaic in vocabulary and had less ease of versification than Radhanatha. In contrast Nandakishora Bala, who had a far smaller range, had much greater ease and grace, like the latter, combined with a much more colloquial vocabulary. Compare the rendering of Shakespeare's "quality of Mercy" lines in *The Merchant of Venice* to lines in Bala's *Sarmishtha* (second canto), which have become equally famous :



Khyama kale jhia ! Khyama ta milai  
 Khyamara na mile anta  
 Khyamara grahita khyamadata duhen  
 A bhubane bhagyabanta.  
 Dibyadhamun sudha tarangini tatu  
 Olhai asichi khyama  
 Prani hitakara barida jibana  
 Sunirmala dhara sama.

The situation is completely Indianized and absorbed into the myth of Sarmishtha and Debajani when Sukracharja, the *guru* of demon king Brusaparba, is fondly admonishing his fiery-tempered daughter, Debajani, and explaining to her the quality of mercy. Thus verbal borrowings for these great poets of the period are only incidental, dispersed here and there in their poems as gathered gems of western culture establishing strong inter-cultural connections.

The nature of the western influence on the literature of the Oriya renaissance is clear now bringing out both its depth and its range. Its depth is measured by the absorption of mythic material even of tabooed nature and its range is from the Greeks to the contemporaries. The levels of borrowings are multifarious but in the hands of these masters they become legitimate inputs of literary tradition. As Vālmīki is to Tulsi-das or Vyasa is to Sarala Dasa, so were the Greek, Roman and English writers to the writers of Oriya renaissance. It is this hybridization which is the essence of cultural growth, that produced masters like Radhanatha or Fakiramohana whose works are yet unsurpassed. In this context it must also be observed that while the former stands far ahead of the others in his reach and ability, the others exhibit equal energy and vitality. We have not dealt with the large number of minor writers, especially poets, who, while they did not produce great literature, contributed equally to inter-cultural energy of the renaissance.

## NOTES

1 The titles the gajapati kings inherited ran as follows : "Gajapati Goudeswara Nabakoti Karnatokalabargeswara biradhi birabara." These are still used and all the Panjis use them, e.g. *Kohinoor Pathani Samanta Panji* of any year.

2 It is likely that *Kedara Gouri* which is based on Pyramus and Thisbe story is influenced as much by Chaucer's handling of the theme in *The Legend of Good Women* in which the story made its first appearance in English.

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# THE ROLE OF WESTERN IMPACT IN THE EMERGENCE OF MODERNISM IN 20TH CENTURY INDIAN LITERATURES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KANNADA

SHANTINATH K. DESAI

## I

Let me begin with a few relevant assumptions about the impact of one culture upon another, about the nature of 'influence' in literature, about the factors that generate a new trend or school in literature and the role of a foreign influence in its genesis and development and, finally, about the process of decolonization in a country once subjugated by an imperial power.

First, in a world which is increasingly becoming smaller on account of rapid developments in science and technology, no culture can develop in isolation and mutual interaction of cultures is inevitable. If we take two such cultures which interact with one another, there are broadly two major patterns : (a) interaction between a dominant culture and a less dominant one (that between Pozzo and Lucky); (b) interaction between more or less 'equal' cultures (that between Estragon and Vladimir). For example, during the days of British Imperialism in India we had the first pattern of interaction between western culture and Indian culture, and during the same period, within the country there was the second pattern among the Indian sub-cultures of different linguistic regions. Actually speaking, both these interactions are immensely complex. Let us take the first kind of interaction. If one culture is dominant and the other submissive because of various socio-political reasons, there are two possibilities : (a) The dominant A might have such an impact on the submissive B that B gets transformed into a variation of A ; (b) If B is resilient and has a strong identity of its own, it assimilates only a few aspects of A and simultaneously reacts strongly against it from within, with the result that it just becomes  $B_1$ . I submit that, in spite of India's borrowing a number of cultural modes and attitudes from the West and apparently indulging sometimes in, what Naipaul calls the mimicry of the West, basically the interaction between the West and India has been of the second type : becoming  $B_1$  and not  $A_1$ .

Secondly, the nature of 'influence' of one writer upon another or one work upon another is of great relevance in the discussion of Indian-Western Literary Relations. There is no denying the fact that there has been a continuous impact of the West on the Indian sensibility since the mid-

19th century. But 'impact' does not imply a blind acceptance of western values and modes of literary expression by the Indians. I do not subscribe to the mimicry theory at all, simply because it is psychologically untenable. Men of talent and genius never mimic, and those who mimic do not contribute anything at all to the central creative flow of a country. On the other hand, there is always an anxiety of influence and the secret revolt against the very things one is influenced by and an intense urge to be different and to assert one's own identity. F.R. Leavis speaks of two kinds of influence : (1) a mechanical kind of influence which results in borrowing a few superficial and fashionable techniques and attitudes, and the other, a creative kind of influence which results in a kind of cross fertilization. Since we are dealing with major writers and major trends, let us assume that it is always the second kind of influence, that is, creative influence that is operative when we speak of, say, Eliot's influence on Mardhekar or Adiga or Buddhadeva Bose. The point is, one is always influenced by what one IS ; one takes in what one means and transforms it into one's own blood. Let us not, therefore, look at influence as something vulgar or secondary. (In fact, talking of Eliot, Eliot himself was influenced by French poets like Laforgue and Corbière.)

Thirdly, when a new trend emerges in literature it is invariably on account of many factors : the pressures of the socio-historic process, generating new socio-political forms ; the weakening of the old cultural modes which fail to tackle the problems of the changing world ; natural antagonism towards the immediately older generation ; the 'foreign' influences suggesting new directions and new possibilities. I use the word 'foreign' in inverted commas, because, in the case of India English language and literature, thanks to its existence for the last two hundred years or so, has attained its own Indian roots and lost its foreignness long ago. English, for us, is not merely a 'window upon the world' but a door through which people come and go (talking of Michelangelo).

Lastly, when we talk of literature in Commonwealth countries we should do that in the context of the continuous process of decolonization. After the first phase of more or less apparently total submission to British culture in the second half of the 19th century, we have the second phase which is characterized by the rise of nationalism, a love-hate relationship towards the master culture. The third phase is marked by the completion of political decolonization, though the cultural decolonization is far from completion. Cultural decolonization is a slower and a more complex

process than political decolonization, since modernization initiated by imperialism is cherished because of its general relevance in the world context and its beneficent effects on the country – more so because political freedom liquidates the element of foreign exploitation. Within the context of modernization it is possible to conceive of two processes – one towards a greater and faster modernization (which, paradoxically, means greater and faster westernization) and the other towards self-conscious nativization. At the moment, India is in the middle of this phase of cultural decolonization.

It is in this framework of thought that I am going to discuss the emergence of modernism in Indian literatures and the role of western impact in this phenomenon.

## II

Let me, as one of the participants in the modernist movement in Kannada make a personal detour and try and give a concrete picture of the emergence of modernism in Kannada in terms of my personal experience.

1945 : I was nineteen and had just passed my Matriculation. I entered college and made a surprising transition from RSS to RDP, as some of my intimate friends did under the influence of some older intelligent young men who had ‘suffered’ during the Quit India Movement and yet lost faith in the Congress. They said, “RSS is reactionary – a fascist organization. Congress is the organization of the capitalists. Once Gandhi and Nehru succeed in getting us freedom – the freedom which the moribund imperialism is handing over inevitably – these capitalists will take over and in the place of a white master we will have a brown master. The real socio-economic change, the real freedom, the real socialism won’t come about. Our fight for freedom is coming to an end. Now we must start fighting for real democraey, real socialism, real freedom – freedom for the masses – for every Indian....” In North Karnatak quite a number of intellectuals had come under the influence of M.N. Roy and we had an active party office and a party paper called *Belaku*, ‘light’. We young blooming middle class intellectuals (Roy said, following Marx, that the middle class is the most revolutionary section in any society and the middle class intellectuals must, therefore, assume the leadership of the masses. They must work as agents of renaissance, they must teach, they must bring light to the masses) worked for the party, wrote for *Belaku*, sold it at street corners, organized the ‘bidi workers’ and the workers in Hubli

Cotton Mills. (If Roy had a following in North Karnatak, in the erstwhile Mysore State Lohia had an equally strong following. Ananthamurthy and Lankesh during the same period became staunch Lohiites – they still are !) Thanks to the schism in the soul, with an ambivalent attitude to nationalism ('patriotism' is not enough), when freedom came in 1947 we could not participate in the celebration whole-heartedly. Intellectuals were supposed to be always sceptical. When Gandhi was assassinated in 1948, our sense of doom got a confirmation : India was upon a downhill path to perdition – with Nehru, the playboy of the Eastern World, at the helm of the still-born Indian democracy. The elections wrought forth all the latent communal and capitalistic forces and the Congress won the elections. The Radical Democratic Party, which did not win a single seat, wound up and dwindled into a cultural club preaching Radical Humanism. Power corrupts, they said, absolute power corrupts absolutely : so no elections, no politics till the renaissance is really complete. The middle class revolutionaries sat in their easy chairs and talked and talked. They turned their attention to other things like literature, theatre, law or income-tax practice, journalism, jobs abroad, Rotary, Congress for Cultural Freedom. Some of us took to modernist writing, read Freud, Jung and Eric Fromm, read Sartre, Camus, read the novels of Huxley, Lawrence, Dostoevsky, Steinbeck – whatever came our way – got excited over Joyce, Proust, Virginia Woolf, Beckett, Eliot, Auden, Spender (Auden and Spender actually visited Bombay and we neo-Marxists and Humanists talked to them), Dylan Thomas.... We will be revolutionaries through literature, we decided. Already acute tensions had grown between us and our elders/parents (thanks to the generation gap) and our tensions got multiplied by expected disappointment in love affairs.... We'll marry, have a job, we said, but still create revolution through our poems, our stories, our novels – at least the next generation, our children will be really free individuals. One of us wrote highly intellectual Auden-like poetry – very thoughtful and Apollonian – another wrote Kafka-like stories and I wrote Woolf plus Katherine Mansfield-like psychological stories and existentialist poetry full of Kierkegaardian and Sartrean ideas. A prestigious journal in Kannada published my poems under the caption "Navya Kavita" and my stories as "Navya Katha". The 'Navyata', modernism, went to my head and I wrote stories about adolescent sex, about illicit love affairs, about children revolting against parents.... My first collection of stories ("A Block of Ice" with a picture of the human

brain on the cover page) came out in 1958 and my 'Navya' stance was crystallized. I heard that in South Karnatak Ramchandra Sharma, A.K. Ramanujan, U.R. Ananthamurthy, Rajalaxmi N. Rao were also writing Navya stories. I was excited. I wrote a novel, *Mukti*, exploring, as honestly as possible, the theme of adolescent sexuality and adolescent disillusionments and dreams. It was hailed as the first modernist novel in Kannada. I got a pat on the back from both Gokak and Adiga, who had already established modernist poetry in the 50s. I found myself part of the state-wide movement called the Navya movement. *Mukti* was followed by a number of modernist novels by many young talented writers, Ananthamurthy's *Samskara* getting the widest attention. We hailed it as a fine modernist novel depicting the existential predicament of Praneshacharya—sex and exile. Lawrence plus Sartre plus Camus all rolled into one—a fine little cocktail that was extremely heady. The young modernist went about producing prolific literature, experimenting with all kinds of themes and techniques. By the middle of the 60s, a Royist and a Communist joined hands to organize a Kannada Sahitya Sammelana and put the Navya movement at the centre of the literary process in Kannada. By the end of the 60s even the absurd drama made its appearance and rendered the amateur theatre a very exciting place. The cup of modernism was full... Meanwhile, as expected, all the wrong things were happening in the country and the modernist writers were 'happy' about recording them in the form of a nightmare along with their private obsessions in their works. Modern Kannada literature became increasingly subtle, ironic, self-centred, obscure and removed itself from the area of popular taste and became a thing of a small coterie. The coterie could not last long because of egoistical considerations, and broke up on a communal basis; the anti-brahmins joined hands against the brahmins and an 'Okkoota' was formed with mixed intentions. Meanwhile a new issue came up, that of commitment, and modernism modified its amoral, ahistorical, existential stance and tried to assimilate the contemporary socio-historic process. The Dalits, thanks to the freedom that modernism had lent to the literary ethos, started producing startling poems and stories with a genuine sense of revolt and an authentic social consciousness. In one sense there is a decline of original modernism in the late 70s and the 80s, though I still think that the modernists had in them the power to assimilate the new contradictions and transcend them....

### III

It would be interesting at this juncture to briefly compare Eliot and Adiga with a view to getting a clear idea of the way western influences work in the Indian context. Gopalakrishna Adiga, an English college teacher, started his career as a romantic poet writing in the tradition of Bendre. But with a difference. The difference lay in the strong intellectual element in his charged idealistic poetry as well as in a strong democratic faith in individualism. It was Eliot who freed him from the romantic self-indulgence and gave him freedom to be genuinely and burningly honest and sincere. If Eliot was disillusioned with the whole of modern civilization (probably with civilization itself), Adiga found his disillusionment in urbanization, modernization, loss of ancient heritage and the trend towards fascism in politics, social corruption, cultural degeneration etc. He preached staunch individualism, genuineness and authenticity of experience and freedom to shape one's soul and one's destiny. His was the disillusionment of an idealist and not that of a deeply religious man who bewailed the general loss of values and the impending doom. For Eliot the only way out was personal salvation through total submission to Christ. Adiga's reaction to the world of crumbling values produced primarily satirical poetry and not the poetry of metaphysical prophecy.... Adiga, too, in his later poetry found a foothold of faith in the semi-divine personality of Rāma – but Rāma, to him, was, in fact an image of a mature, free, committed, ideal individual, revealing a possibility of life towards the dissatisfied souls of modern urbanized existence. Though he asks some fundamental questions about the purpose of life and man's essential limitations, he has, one feels, a strong conception of a life of fulfilment. Eliot's vision is subtler, encompassing suffering, death, martyrdom, waste and waiting – living and partly living. Adiga's sense of purpose is directed towards social reform and possibly a revolution and not towards a flight into meditation and mysticism. In style Adiga achieves the rhetoric of satire and sometimes a delicate balance of irony and compassion. Essentially his is a strongly moralistic point of view concerned with involvement in the socio-historic process. Eliot transcended his concern for history quite early in his career and hitched his wagon to the spiritual/mystical star – in quest of that valuable moment in the rose garden, the point of intersection of the timeless with time....

What Adiga effectively used were Eliot's earlier techniques of (a) the



use of quotations, (b) the use of classical mythology, (c) the use of 'I', (d) dramatization in terms of concrete scenes merging film-like into others, (e) juxtaposition of the serious and the trivial. What Eliot's influence did, not only with reference to Adiga's poetry but the whole of modern Kannada poetry, was to widen the range of poetry and make it excitingly inclusive. Of course, there are dangers in this inclusiveness, particularly the danger of diffusiveness, but a poet like Adiga with a strong philosophical and ethical point of view could use it successfully.

Similar creative influences could be traced in writers like Ananthamurthy, A.K. Ramanujan, Girish Karnad, Lankesh – almost any important writer of the 60s. We could face the influences of Camus, Sartre, Salinger, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams and a host of others. But the important point is the way these influences were internalized in the context of Indian ethos, as our brief comparison of Eliot and Adiga shows.

What western modernism did to Indian writers was to give them a foretaste and a foreknowledge of what would happen if certain trends in Indian culture were allowed to develop towards their logical end. For example, let us take the process of dehumanization brought in by urbanization and industrialization. Since the western writers already explored this phenomenon, the Indian writers could effectively tackle the problem of dehumanization in India. Of course, there would be sometimes exaggeration and the result would look unrealistic. Again, the western modernist literature presents the world as a nightmare and man as an atomized being, ruthless, lonely, alienated etc. In Indian modernist literature too life becomes nightmarish and man, too, suffers from ruthlessness and alienation – but on a different level. In the West, the predicament is irremediable and gains the status of being something metaphysical, but in India it is presented as remediable since the socio-political causation is clearly in the background.... The point I am trying to make is, for the Indian modernist, western literature presents a magnified reflection, as in a magnifying mirror, the Indian problems which are in their embryonic stage.

Modernist literature in Kannada alienated itself from the general reading public, and distrust of grand claims for the dignity and significance of man produced a reductive quality, which became increasingly unattractive even to the modernist readers and, as the response to the second phase of modernist writing showed, modern writing lost its hold

and dynamism. The theatre of the absurd, anti-novels and anti-poems had only a short-lived curiosity.... Meanwhile the cult of commitment saved modernism from an insipid, undignified decline. The cult of commitment produced interesting novels, stories and poems dealing with actual socio-political problems, and it also brought in the newly educated Dalits who started writing in an excitingly new way. In a way, modernism with its concentration on 'existential life helped the Dalits to present their experience in a frank and objective manner.... The important thing is even the modernists came out of their private shells and started looking at socio-political problems. Thus they were back again—wiser, maturer, more inclusive, more relevant, more outward looking, more interesting....

When we look at the modernist literature of the 50s, the 60s and the 70s from the vantage point of the 80s, we see that modernism did bring in many significant factors which not only gave a new dynamism to our literatures but also brought them on par with western literatures. First, the language of literature became extremely sensitive and subtle on every level—phonological, syntactic and semantic. With all the 'isms' like symbolism, imagism, surrealism teasing the Indian writer into thought he became extremely conscious of even a syllable and a metaphor. Modernism brought in, apart from linguistic self-consciousness an Apollonian element, both of which rendered our languages capable of tackling the ambivalent and complex areas of experience. It also brought in an awareness, though magnified, of the dangers of westernization.... In the next phase of decolonization, with nativistic urges coming to the surface, our literatures will look at the modernist phase as an era of liberation from the traditional forms and modes of perception and thinking, and also as an era of preparation to face the real nightmare when it comes....

# EMERGENCE OF MODERNISM IN GUJARATI POETRY AND THE WESTERN INFLUENCE

BIHOLABHAI PATEL

If we try to find out the origin of recent Gujarati literature, we would find it somewhere in the contact with and the influence of western literature, especially of English literature and culture—the contact which we have had in the middle of the 19th century. This contact is not limited to literature only ; it extends to many other aspects that have promoted literary activities. It brings for us the first printing press ; it encourages the first circulation of daily newspapers ; it instigates the publication of journals and magazines. Under the new British rule, universities are established ; the pattern of education changes and textbooks are prepared with new attitudes. It is what we may call a “grand-swell” in our cultural life (U. Joshi).

As a result of this contact, on the one hand the influence of English literature is felt directly, and on the other, because of it the Gujarati writer becomes aware of the dignified heritage of his own culture and tradition. The western scholars had drawn our attention to the treasures of Sanskrit literature. Consequently, the Gujarati writer in spite of being attracted by the new contacts and new traditions, goes in search of his own tradition and roots. With the arrival of the Renaissance as we call it, and in the moments of our crisis of identity as a culture, this writer tends to visualize the solution in the synthesis of East and West.

The last major Gujarati medieval poet Dayaram died in 1852. Narmad (1833-1886) had already started writing poems in the new vein of western influence. He is considered the first among the moderns. He coined the word ‘swadeshabhiman’ in Gujarati, as he was actually aware of our slavery. The tendencies of medieval Gujarati literature all of a sudden get wound up, giving place to the development of Gujarati prose. The various forms of Gujarati prose like the novel, drama, essay, literary criticism that are explored at this juncture, are mostly modelled upon the English literary tradition of the time. Shri Umashankar Joshi has rightly observed that “the yuga kavya of the century” is written in prose in the form of *Saraswatichandra*, the first part of which was published in 1887 and the fourth and the last in 1901. *Saraswatichandra* (Govardhanram Tripathi) presents, so to speak, the synthesis of East and West, in the truest sense of the term.

Confining my paper to Gujarati poetry, I would say that Narasinhrao

Diwetia's *Kusum-mala* (1887) is an important landmark in modern Gujarati poetry. The poet writes in the preface that this collection of short 'musical poems' (*sangita kavya*) has been published (1) to show what the real spirit and form of poetry is, and how variedly are poems, distinguished from our own, written in the West, (2) to introduce this to the learned reading public of Gujarat not merely through dry and uninteresting critical analysis, but through concrete illustrations, and (3) to channelize their attitudes and interests also towards that type of poetry.

Narasinhrao has to coin the term 'sangita kavya' for the English term 'lyric'. Expression of personal emotions, nature, love etc are the themes of these poems. The poems of the romantic poets like Shelley and Wordsworth, included in the fourth part of the *Golden Treasury*, are Narasinhrao's models. New poetic forms like the sonnet, ode and elegy are accepted and adapted and thus the current of modern Gujarati poetry begins to flow.

In the beginning many poems were composed merely in imitation of English poems ; some were translations from the English, others trans-creations. This is to show that the process of influence causes a direct-indirect reception to English poetry, starting with mere imitations.

The ideals of Gujarati poetry of the period were controlled and moulded by the romantic critical approaches of Hazlitt and others and later by those of Arnold and other Victorians. Ruskin's critique too affected them.

Gandhiji visited India in 1908, with his *Hind Swaraj* in Gujarati, which was one of the epoch-making books. Gandhiji gave the word 'swa-raj'. We discern his influence in general on Gujarati literature throughout the first half of this century. The Gujarati writer, during the years of the Independence Movement, begins thus to care more for his identity. He tends to stay away from the direct influence of English poetry ; the poetic forms nonetheless remain western. This can be clearly exemplified by the sonnet form. With a few exceptions, almost all Gujarati poets have tried their hand with this form and even today the tradition continues.

After this background it will be convenient and proper to discuss the contribution of the western influence to the emergence and extension of modernism in Gujarati poetry.

In the true sense of the term, 'modernist' poetry in Gujarati begins to come out after the Second World War, i.e. in the post-Independence era. Before Independence, it was consciously or unconsciously the poetry of a

fresh departure. No doubt, we are open and responsive to the influences of world literature in general, but our attitudes guided by our political slavery have gradually waned away.

Modernism in Gujarati poetry has imbibed to a great extent all the different aspects and tenets of the movement of modernism that took hold of world literature.

If we consider the varied literary movements that pervaded the European literary scene in the first three decades of this century, then we see that the influence of modernism is felt in Gujarati poetry in the fifth decade. The movement influenced Gujarati poetry in two ways :

1. Through the poetry of those writers who are called modernists ;
2. Through the poetics propounded by these modernist writers.

I have kept in view mainly three of these modernist poets — Baudelaire, Rilke and Eliot — whose influence is obviously and positively seen in Gujarati modern poetry.

It is generally accepted that the basic tenets of the modernist movement of the West are rooted in the poetry of the French poet Baudelaire. Baudelaire came with the composition of the first modernist poems, especially the poems written on city-dwellers and city-life, collected in *The Flowers of Evil* (1857). The movement thus emerges in the West in the middle of the 19th century. After Baudelaire, through the symbolist poetry of Mallarmé-Valéry on the one hand, and that of Rimbaud-Verlaine on the other, the new poetics came into vogue. The idea of pure poetry is propagated ; the choice of the word and the use of the language — kavikarma — becomes the main concern of the poets (“poetry is made up of words, not ideas” — Mallarmé). Suggestivity becomes the essential quality of the poem. (“To name an object is to suppress three quarters of the enjoyment of a poem, which is made up of gradual guessing, the dream is to suggest it.” — Mallarmé). The Imagist Movement in the West occupies a central place in the different poetic movements in the first three decades. In the 20th century, as propounded by Pound with the slogan “Make it New”, this tradition of poetry assimilates the poetics of symbolist poetry. The poetry and the poetics of Rilke and Eliot are imbibed with subtleties and nuances of this poetics. Thereafter, the Surrealist Movement of poetry and some such movements greatly transform the scene of European poetry. The true ‘modernist lyric’ comes into existence.

All these ‘isms’ and movements seemed to thrill the Gujarati poets. These movements that have covered some six or seven decades in Europe

to emerge and expand, seem to have influenced the Gujarati poets simultaneously. Here Baudelaire, Rilke and Eliot are so to speak contemporaries.

Gujarati poetry was governed principally by Gandhism and Marxism in the 30s. At the end of this decade Prahlad Parekh brings about a new turn, in the sense that instead of idealistic Gandhian thought, his poems show forth purely aesthetic attitudes. Harishchandra Bhatt in the 40s explores the Greek myths, symbols and themes to such an extent that one is tempted to consider him a poet from a European land. Until then western poetry was more or less equated with English poetry. Harishchandra evades this equation by making the Gujarati poet have a feeling for and experience continental poetry side by side with English poetry.

Baudelaire, Rilke and Eliot, along with the other European poets, are for the first time explicitly mentioned in Harishchandra's poetry and in his letters to his intimate friends. He writes to Umashankar Joshi :

I have come across an excellent critical book on Hopkins, Yeats and four modern youngsters (Spender, Auden etc.)...(19.9.41)

Recently I have got Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*....I shall send it later....I have yet to send you Michael Angelo and Shppho...(1.1.42)

One of Rilke's poems in *Later Poems* is addressed to Hölderlin....I have known since long the poems of the modern Greek poet Kostas Palamas...(31.1.42)

I have ordered for Baudelaire's *Letters to his Mother*...(1.10.42)

Harishchandra insistently tells Umashankar : "I couldn't yet get your impressions about Rilke...."(17.5.41) "Would you wish to read Dante in Italian ?"(27.4.41)

In Harishchandra's letters we find several references to the novels of Marcel Proust, Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus* and *Duino Elegies* ; to Valéry and to the Slavik poets.

Harishchandra wrote odes to Yeats, Rilke, Baudelaire etc in the fourth decade. This clearly indicates the reception of modernistic trends in Gujarati. In his manuscript of the poem addressed to Baudelaire, he does not hesitate to write "To St. Baudelaire—my favourite poet". He calls Baudelaire "Ariel, Fallen Angel". He writes to Umashankar, "I have canonised him long ago". He has composed poems on Rodin's well-known sculpture "Kiss". From Greek and Roman mythology, he writes poems on characters like Pegasus, Icarus, Echo, Narcissus etc.

Thus, as Umashankar Joshi puts it, in themes, ideologies and ideas of Harishchandra's poems, the scholars would find a great 'impact' of Euro-

pean literature. But nowhere would one find such tenets employed without having been felt and experienced personally. Even then Harishchandra is not a modernist poet ; his poetic technique is traditional rather than modernist ; by temperament he is a romantic poet.

But Baudelaire's positive influence helps to establish one of such romantic poets as the first modernist poet in Gujarati. Niranjan Bhagat, a student of English literature, appears with his poems in the fifth decade. He starts writing with a romantic exuberance. In imitation of Rabindranath's English *Gitanjali* this poet also endeavours to compose lyrics in English. But his friendship with Harishchandra makes him intimately acquainted with European poets like Baudelaire and Rilke. This acquaintance give a significant turn to Niranjan's poetry—a turn that proves pivotal even to Gujarati poetry in general. Gujarati poetry now looks forward to exploring the modernist tendencies.

A question would naturally arise. What were the powerful factors that popularized a French or a German poet among the Gujarati poets ? Before Independence, we Indians were rotting under slavery at three different fronts—political, economic and cultural. Commenting on the Gujarati poetry that flourished during British Rule (from 1857 to 1947) a critic remarks that the new departures in our tradition of poetry during that century are the direct outcome of English influence, and they are therefore a positive proof of our stunted sensibility. We hardly noticed the creation of poems as such as a natural result of the intense need of the poet's inner self. Since Narmad to the recent times, we danced to the tunes from the West.

This statement can be certainly challenged, because the Gujarati writer, during the years of his slavery, was deeply committed to finding out the roots of his identity, especially under Gandhiji's influence. However, he becomes more intesely active only in the years after Independence. Having freed himself from the political slavery, he tries to free himself from the cultural slavery of the English people.

At this juncture Baudelaire, Rilke, Eliot—i.e. the modernist movement of the West— influences Gujarati poetry. The ground was now prepared for its proper reception ; Independence had un-covered us totally without any reservation. Independence, the partition of the country and with that urbanization and industrialization, shook the creative sensibility of the poet to the roots ; now it was urgent to explore new poetic techniques to express his new and sharpened mental states. In the field of fiction, on

the one hand the writer goes out to analyze the social reality, and on the other employs the technique of the stream of consciousness.

The poet experiments with various poetic forms. He moves between free verse and the prose poem. He is in tune with Baudelaire's consciousness which sprouts in the soil of Gujarati poetry, thus, after one hundred years. Niranjan Bhagat's *Prawal Dwipa* published in 1956 immediately reminds us of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens* published in 1856. The impact of the poetry of Rilke and Eliot is also significant and decisive. The ideals of the Symbolist Movement were assimilated along with the influence of the Imagist Movement.

It is not worthwhile here to illustrate the resemblances or parallels with or adaptations from Baudelaire's poems in Niranjan's *Prawal Dwipa* – a group of poems dealing with the theme of the city. Niranjan Bhagat's 'mahanagar' is not Paris, it is Bombay. In a poem like "Gayatri" on Bombay, Niranjan has communed with Baudelaire's spirit. It is the first highest peak achieved in Gujarati poetry in the years after Independence.

Niranjan Bhagat is the avant-garde Gujarati. He popularizes the poetry of the important modernist poets of the West like Eliot, Pound and Rilke among the young Gujarati poets. In a way, he is the proponent of the imagist movement in Gujarati.

Over and above Baudelaire, we can notice Rilke's direct influence on some of Niranjan's poems. In the poem "Die Stimmen : Neun Blätter mit einem Titel-blatt" from Rilke's *Das Buch der Bilder*, there are monologues of a beggar, a blind man and a leper. Niranjan creates the characters like the blind, the prostitute and the leper in *Prawal Dwipa*. The structure and the spirit of Niranjan's poetry are, however, quite different from those of Rilke.

As we have seen, Umashankar Joshi was intimately acquainted, through Harishchandra, with the modern European literary scene and the modernist poets ; yet it is curious and surprising that in his poems composed during the 30s and the 40s, we do not find these modernist tendencies. It is only in 1956, in one of his poems, "Chhinna-Bhinna", that they finally became apparent.

Through Niranjan Bhagat's poetry and criticism, poets like Priyakant Maniar are indirectly influenced by the modernist movement of the West. Priyakant had studied only up to the ninth grade. The title of the first collection of his poems *Pratik* is appropriate for the poems collected in it. In another collection, *Ashabd Ratri*, Priyakant comes through as a poet



of urban life and of urban people. Hasmukh Pathak too belongs to the same group. Pathak's poetic technique seems to follow that of Eliot's and at times that of Dylan Thomas.

Yet Baudelaire remains the most discussed poet among the poets of that period. After 1960 once again Gujarati poetry passes through a new phase. With it Baudelaire becomes more alive. This new turn is felt after the publication of Suresh Joshi's journal *Kshitij*. In the beginning of the 60s, Radheshyam Sharma's collection of prose-poems *Aansu ane Chandaranu* appears, on the title page of which a few lines from Baudelaire are quoted.

While analyzing one of the poems of the Gujarati poet Gulam Mohammad Sheikh, Suresh Joshi remarks that one inhales the air of Baudelaire's poetry in him. In the poetry of Suresh Joshi himself, where he expresses the emotion of 'ennui', one can hear an echo of Baudelaire.

The translation of Baudelaire's poems in Bengali by Buddhadeva Bose is published in 1961. Almost at the same time, Suresh Joshi's translation of Baudelaire is published in Gujarati. It is quite possible that Suresh Joshi had read Buddhadeva Bose's translations. The inner need of a Gujarati poet is clearly visible in this Gujarati translation of Baudelaire. However soon translations of some of Eliot's poems and criticism on those poems, are also published in Gujarati.

The impact of modernism extends widely on Gujarati literature during the 60s. Suresh Joshi forms a nucleus of poets and critics around the journal *Kshitij*. As a critic, his approach is formalistic. He also propagates Valéry's principle of pure poetry. Through his critical studies he makes known the then established principles of French Symbolism.

Umashankar Joshi once delivered a series of lectures (under the auspices of Bombay University) entitled "Kavita Vivek". In one of them, which he named the "Poetic Process" ("Kavi Karma") he concentrated on and emphasized the poetic of Valéry. Along with that, referring to Baudelaire's sonnet "Correspondences" and quoting the line "perfumes, sounds and colours correspond" a critic talks of the technique of 'synesthesia' which gradually influences the poetry of Gujarati poets.

The impact of Surrealism follows the impact of symbolist-imagist poetry. At that time the impact of existentialism and phenomenology too is felt in Gujarati literature. In the second issue of *Sandarbh* (a magazine edited by Sitanshu Yashaschandra and Prabodh Parikh), there was a pronouncement on the arrival of surrealist poetry in Gujarat. That

magazine, however, was discontinued after the publication of four issues on an experimental basis. The point is, the Gujarati poets have their manifestoes now. Sitanshu Yashaschandra consciously composed surrealist poems and used to attach the subtitle “one surreal poem” to most of his early poems.

The group of poets called “Ray Math” also becomes active now. From that group Labhshankar Thaker’s voice is heard most prominently.

Since 1960, these two poets – Sitanshu and Labhshankar – have revealed their distinctiveness and originality after assimilating the western influences. Sitanshu deals and works with Indian myths and medieval poetic forms on an experimental basis ; Labhshankar’s *Manasni Vat* presents a thoughtful vein of poetry.

Modernism has finally found roots in the Gujarati soil.

# INTERPLAY OF ORAL AND VISUAL MODES IN MODERN PANJABI POETRY

TEJWANT SINGH GILL

Modern Panjabi poetry forwards an uneven interplay of the oral and the visual modes in terms of its literary production, reception and effect. Marked essentially by the visual mode, its literary production is disposed to express the present meaning rather than the past significance of "lived experience"<sup>1</sup> ; so "preoccupation with the problematic" characterizes its subject-matter at this juncture. It perceives the subject-matter synchronically by reducing it to its spatial parameters. Through the use of the optic faculty, it reveals those aspects of reality which have so far remained hidden from the lived experience. At the same time it defines much of the past as residual lacking in organic relation with the dominant present and the emerging future. Likewise, its style is distinctive for obscurity, abruptness, "suggestive influence of the unexpressed, background quality and multiplicity of meanings", etc.

The oral mode that marked Panjabi poetry in the pre-Independence era is in a state of replacement or displacement or both. Subject-matter with "few elements of historical development and of psychological perspective" is no longer its forte. Diachronic perception of reality that characterized it through its temporal parameters has become peripheral. The Oral mode operating through the use of the aural faculty is employed only to contrast the residual past with the dominant present or the emergent future. "Fully externalized description, uniform illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression"<sup>2</sup>, etc as aspects of its style have gone into disuse if not dissolution, for that matter.

For the oral mode to characterize Panjabi poetry thus in the pre-Independence era, was natural because the processes of literary production, reception and effect were then in accord with its essential disposition. Its literary production sought to signify the values of the past for relations and experiences available from the life of the present, particularly of the countryside that still had agriculture as its dominant mode of production. The aversion for change, that this mode of production showed in the course of history, oriented the lived experience of the Panjabi people. Under its impact, they forwarded the universal impulse to explain life in terms of human relation with nature. After all, men living in society do not thereby cease also to live in nature. They continue receiving occasion and material from it for their curiosity and fantasy. Human dependence

upon nature, howsoever diminished since prehistoric times, persists and this persistence is all the more so in the case of people who have either lost in the historical struggle or have become sceptic of its efficacy.<sup>3</sup>

At the inception of the pre-Independence era, the Panjabi people suffered a historic loss in a historical struggle against the British. This resulted in the dissolution of the *Sikh raj* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh with which the Hindus and the Muslims had identified themselves in no small measure. To all intents and purpose, it was a national-popular *raj* of the Panjabis in general. More than that, it had given sovereign status to the Panjab that had only been invaders' gateway of influx for at least two millennia. Of course, history is open-ended and the historical process does not observe final determinations. All the same, it may not be wrong to contend that history, which does not observe final determinations, saw the Panjab sovereign for the first and perhaps the last time only in the form of the *Sikh raj* of those times.

This political loss accentuated the feeling of nature's persistence in human life that the agricultural mode of production had generated in the course of history. At this juncture the natural wish of the Panjabi people was to advance all that was non-social and non-historical to the position and criterion of all that was social and historical. Birth, copulation and death, which nature testifies as the final facts of life, tended to become surrogates of production, labour and consumption which history has advanced as its basic categories. This was a universal feeling of the Panjabi people till the growth of revivalistic and nationalist feelings oriented them towards progress, independence, secularism and modernization.

The feel of all this was there in Panjabi poetry of the pre-Independence era. For all its typological distinctions, it employed the oral mode for its production and reception. At the anonymous level was the folklore itself. In a state of continuous production from the time of the Muslim invasions onward, this folklore comprised songs meant to glorify birth (*lorian*) reflect upon love (*bolian*, *taape*, *mahia*), celebrate marriage (*ghorrian*, *sithnian*) and mourn over death (*wan*), etc. Anonymously produced, they underwent transmission of the diachronic sort in a rather diffuse way. Their intrinsic speaker was usually the prototype of Panjabi village-woman whose double profile embodied the pleasure-principle and the reality-principle to which she was subject in her unmarried and married states, respectively.

Parallel to these songs were narratives of battles (*vara*). Their speaker

was the prototype of the village-youth who talked of his bodily prowess in a rather unabashed way. The battle he waged, was not against the alien rulers who both oppressed and suppressed the people. His antagonist was the collateral tyrant who had either occupied his land or snatched his woman. In this way, those narratives of battles excluded historical process from their perspective but included collateral kinship into their composition. As a result, they failed to grow into an epic form that might have explained how the historical destiny of the Panjab became indetical with its natural destiny. Ever since then, Panjabi literature has remained without an original epic of its own though several epics have come to be written subsequently in imitation of the western epics.

The production and transmission of this oral poetry was by word of mouth. In the process, no reliance was put on the written or printed word. Since both the processes went anonymously, its producer and transmitter became one with its reciter. No essential distinction was posited between the three of them. As a result, the reciter added his own composition to the extending corpus of oral poetry. If compositions reflecting the varying feelings and emotions of domestic life came to the reciter by word of mouth from nobody knows whence and where, he also added such compositions on his own as commented upon the social and political situation of the time. In this regard, the following couplets are extremely relevant for registering the popular attitude towards the British rule and the revivalist movements in the second half of the 19th century :

- (a) *Where would you put aside the British rule,  
That weighs like a basket of oranges on your head ?*
- (b) *When not a grain was left in the pitcher  
They converted themselves into Singh Sabhias.*

This was the oral poetry of the Panjab. Its composition, transmission and recitation went on in the oral language. The oral language is distinct from the written language both in extrinsic and intrinsic terms. In extrinsic terms communication in the former is through spoken words whereas in the latter it is through written words. This results in an intrinsic distinction between the two. The semantic aspect of the spoken word is determined by their phonetic aspect. The written words have their phonetic aspect, but it does not restrict their semantic aspect. This intrinsic distinction exercises a direct bearing upon expression that becomes profound in the written but remains spontaneous in the spoken language. These dispo-

sitions make the spoken language a mode of expression for common sense as against good sense that may seek expression in the written language.

The common sense of the Panjabi people, finding expression in the oral, aspired for good sense in the written poetry. In the pre-Independence era, it became available as narrative poetry (*kissa sahit*) in which a prominent place was claimed by the narration of love-tales. In the act of narrating them, the *kissakars* (Bhagwan Singh, Kishan Singh Arif, Jag Singh, Sadhu Daya Ram, Fazal Shah, Kalidas, Jilan, Boota, etc) concerned themselves with the meetings and the departures of the lovers. Borrowing motifs, expressions and topoi from their predecessors, they tried to impart titillating and erotic touch to their description. Many times they became obscene and pornographic as well. In this respect they were partly like and partly unlike their predecessors (Damodar, Piloo, Mukbul, Waris and Hashim, etc). The earlier *kissakars* resorted to erotic description for posing a contrast between the social and the natural worlds. Their emphasis upon the protuberances, convexities and apertures of the female body gave a concrete shape to the natural world, that they cherished in contrast to the social world closed on all sides by religious prescriptions, legal measures and social customs.<sup>4</sup>

This antinomial awareness was, however, lacking in the later *kissakars*. Instead of acquiring ideological, albeit cultural, proportions purple passages in their *kissas* tended to become exercises in pornography and obscenity. In this way, the common sense of the Panjabi people, that the oral poetry recorded so well, sought elaboration in the narrative compositions. Rather than direct itself into good sense, it tended to misdirect itself into bad sense of a sort. This misdirection was however caused by the socio-historical torpor into which the Panjabi people were driven by their defeat at the hands of the British.

In this narrative poetry, the equation between composition, transmission and recitation operated in a different way. The *kissakars* were known persons usually from the middle or the lower strata of village-society. So the job of composing the *kissa* was a source of livelihood and respectability for them. They derived livelihood from their share in the income of the reciters who were at the same time performers. Reciters and performers at the same time, they (*kaveeshars*) made only very marginal changes in the compositions of the *kissakars*. Known as such in the Malwa area of the Panjab, their chief forte was the recitation of love-tales. The reason for their popularity in the Malwa was that this area

had been in a state of natural torpor more than any other area of the Panjab.

Analogous to *kaveeshars* in the Malwa, were *dhadis* in the Majha, the area that formed the centre of the Panjab. The *dhadis* were the performing reciters of the *vars* which the bards of the area composed in imitation of the earlier compositions. After all, the heroic Sikh struggle, that resulted in the consolidation of the *Sikh raj*, was chiefly waged in the central Panjab. Though not completely, the Malwa had remained free from it to a considerable extent. At this juncture however, the enthusiasm and fervour, that the Sikh struggle had generated, was dormant even amongst the people of Majha. This was vouchsafed by the relative prominence that the *kaveeshars* acquired over the *dhadis* even in this area.

## I

This literary phenomenon prevailed in the pre-Independence era. From the beginning of the 20th century, it was progressively subverted by written poetry that sought to implement visual into the oral mode for literary production, reception and effect. The impulse for that came from the new awakening caused by the revivalistic movement like *The Singh Sabha* and *The Arya Samaj* on one hand, and the western education and scholarship on the other. The role of the national movement at this stage was marginal though it became prominent in the course of time. Rather than come into conflict, the revivalistic and the western stances coincided to produce this new awakening. Their coincidence caused the oral and the visual modes to coincide in the production of poetry, as effect of the revivalistic impulse and the western influence respectively.

The initiator of this trend was Bhai Vir Singh. Essentially religious, he took upon himself the arduous task of disseminating religious values as veritable for Sikhs in the 20th century. So he resorted to literary production felt essential by him for this sort of dissemination. In the first instance, he dispensed with the earlier practice of composing a writing and leaving it to the performer or the reciter to transmit it orally to the listeners. Instead of the listeners, he concerned himself with the readers who were to ponder over his writings to get his message. A very productive writer, he became a tireless printer and publisher, as well.

In regarding the listeners as readers, he did not posit them essentially as adversaries. Posited as complementary they forwarded him as an educator destined to cause a permanent change in their view of life. So

he did not confine himself to writing poetry though his chief forte lay in poetry now available in *Lehran de Har* (Garlands of Waves), *Bijlian de Har* (Garlands of Lightnings), *Rana Surat Singh* and *Mere Sayian Jia* (My Master). In these writings, he assiduously tried to show the veracity the themes and motifs of *The Adi Granth* had for the Sikhs in the present era.

For this purpose he explored the oral, but for veracity and efficacy employed the visual mode for poetic topoi. Impulse for this came to him from the romantic poets of England, particularly Wordsworth. Like him he took objects from the natural and the social worlds to which his attention was drawn through the exercise of his visual mode. The following poem composed upon a piece of coal may be taken for illustration in this regard.

Wash a piece of coal with soap,  
Soak it in milk and curds  
Boil it in caustic, and then in the dye-pan.  
It will not change its colour,  
The blackness is the result of parting,  
It will not go without reunion.

In this poem, prominence is awarded to the motif of spiritual reunion that his oral mode provides to him under the burden of his revivalistic instinct. To communicate that he does not employ a man-woman paradigm or other like paradigms so abundantly employed in the Sikh scriptures. He rather chooses an insignificant object from the profane world and visualizes it transfigured with a spirit as romantic poets, particularly Wordsworth, saw it glorified with a pagan touch. No doubt, this entailed the use of the visual mode in the subordinate capacity. As such, it awarded a present meaning to the past significance of the religious themes and motifs in a diachronic way. It differed from the earlier practice that was oral or nearly oral for that matter.

The practice acquired new extent and depth in Puran Singh who, along with religious, had cultural and aesthetic preoccupations. An advocate of the spiritual identity of the Panjab, he nurtured his oral mode upon diverse trends of Panjabi poetry, i.e. *Gurbani*, *Kissa-sahit* and *Sufi-kay*, etc. At the same time, he was ardently interested in 19th century European, British and American poetry. Walt Whitman, presenting in his poetry the spiritual identity of America, evoked his special interest. His scientific education equipped him with rationalism that impelled him



to avoid the metaphysical preoccupations of the poets of this trend. In his writings, *Khule Maidan* (Wide Plains) and *Khule Ghund* (Wide Veils) he evoked the spiritual identity of the Panjab by drawing themes and motifs from the diverse trends of Panjabi poetry, jointly at the diachronic and the synchronic scales of human awareness. So, he communicated the feeling that the Panjab was indistinguishably the land of Sikh heroes, Nath yogis, Sufi saints and legendary lovers. In several of his poems, he opined that it was the land of the gurus. Ranjha, being an ideal Panjabi, was a guru's follower in the essential sense of the word. Thus to the Sikh gurus he awarded the autochthonous ethos of the popular lovers and to the latter the spiritual transcendence of the gurus. Feeling these qualities intrinsic to the land of the Panjab, he perceived them as shared by every Panjabi irrespective of his religion, caste and creed.

Puran Singh employed the technique of a juxtapositional flow for signifying his perception. In this the oral was actively aided by the visual mode. The visual mode further aided him in portraying contemporary persons as figurally reflecting the qualities of the gurus, the yogis, the heroes and the lovers. In this way, Puran Singh went beyond Bhai Vir Singh in affirming the visual mode. Under the burden of his scientific knowledge he also departed from him in awarding religion only a relative significance in life. The following poem is an eloquent expression of this new impulse :

People claim God in all. He is all,  
Everywhere, in everything,  
He is where you cast a look,  
But my eyes are not visionary yet,  
I don't see him everywhere.  
My eyes don't have visions yet,

I don't see Him everywhere in everything.  
For me He is covered in a million veils,  
Sometimes lightning reveals Him a bit,  
Sometimes light affords a glance,  
I rarely see God,  
I am to be pitied, indeed.

Here, the visual mode seems to have advanced from the choice of the topoi to that of a state of being. As such the poem reflects a preoccupation with the problematic that further signifies the coincidence of the oral and the visual modes.

Rather than a flowing composition, this poetry is essentially a structural whole, the present meaning of which can be learnt better if its past

significance is taught at the same time. This coincidence between teaching and learning denotes that its reception and effect are reserved for a reader who beyond his unviable being aspires for a viable becoming.

This coincidence between the oral and the visual modes changes into a conflict, in the progressive poetry that has come to be written prominently from the beginning of the 30s. As the most prominent poets of the progressive trend, Mohan Singh in *Saave Pattar* (Green Leaves), *Adhvate* (Half Way), *Awazan* (Voices), *Jandre* (Locks) and *Buhe* (Doors) and Amrita Pritam in *Pathar Gheete* (Stones and Pebbles), *Lambian Vaattan* (Long Journeys) and *Sunehre* (Messages) hold to the ideology of progress, corresponding with the widespread consciousness that a certain relationship has been reached between society and nature. As a result, mankind as a whole is more sure of its future and can conceive rationally of plans through which to govern its entire life.

As defined by their gender Mohan Singh and Amrita Pritam believe that poverty, inequality and obscurantism generated by feudalism, casteism and religion petrify life, particularly of the subaltern people living in the countryside. This becomes evident from the poetic definition that Mohan Singh provides to his poetry in the following stanza :

These songs relate neither to a princess  
Nor to a valley of love and beauty ;  
These are the outbursts of a pleading soul  
Meant to stir those with human feelings.

So opposition to these institutions is the primary concern of their poetry. As a counterpoint, age-old sexual starvation also draws their attention. Evident of it is the exhortation that is addressed to a stream in the following lines of Mohan Singh :

Come along my friend, under those tall trees,  
Wrap your wavy arms for ever around my neck,  
Heave your breast and touch it with mine for sobering effect,  
Make love to me unabashed, don't feel shy of the tall trees,  
Not jealous like the people, they help lovers with shade,  
Come along my friend, under those tall trees.

This is natural because in all ages social constraints have expressed themselves most violently through the suppression of sexual instincts. A nexus of two adds bodily and creatural dimensions to the reflection of reality that in their view is ideologically oriented in its genesis and growth. They hold that the bodily aspect of the human being, notwithstanding his social

and historical localization, makes him real and determines the essential content of his life.

This widespread consciousness results from the fact that their literary production has corresponded initially with the awakening of the Panjabi peasantry for national independence. Rather than hearken to life of the past, they seek themes and motifs in the life of the present. Instead of memory that is the medium of the oral mode, they employ insight that requires the exercise of the visual mode. By employing it thus, they have produced poetry that emphasizes the importance of economic quality, political solidarity and social fraternity. Obviously, this is the poetry of the greatest use-value.

By employing the visual mode in the first instance, they do not repudiate the oral mode altogether. They employ it for appropriating the past that they regard as residual. This appropriation is evocative of social reality in the following poem that Amrita Pritam has written to express her sense of horror at the atrocities accompanying the partition of Panjab :

Now I invoke Waris Shah to sing somewhere from the graves,  
And turn now some other leaf of the book of love.

When wailed a single daughter of the Panjab, you wrote elegies,  
Now lakhs of daughters wail to claim your attention

You who felt the pain of the pain-stricken, rise and look at the Panjab,  
The *bela* is covered with corpses and the Chenab overflows with blood.

Someone has mixed poison in the water of the five rivers,  
And the poisoned water has watered the fields now.

Poison inheres every particle of the earth,  
Fiery glows are rising and havoc is raging everywhere

The charmers were bitten first and their charms are gone,  
And this act of biting possesses everyone now.

All are turned snakes and biting goes on all around,  
In no time is the Panjab grown feeble and bloodless.

Snapped songs lurk in throats and rotten threads in spinning wheels,  
Gone are daughters of the spinning wheel, silent is its music now,

The boatman has overturned boats with bridal beds,  
Along with branches the trees have let go the swings now.

The pipe that sounded with breath of love is lost,  
And all friends of Ranjha have forgotten his lore of love.

Blood is pouring and graves are dripping with blood,  
Princesses of love are wailing at deserted places.

All are turned Kaidos to steal away beauty and love,  
From where may be invoked another Waris Shah now.  
Now I invoke Waris Shah to sing somewhere from the graves,  
And turn now some other leaf of the book of love.

Visually evoked in the poem is the partition marked by murders, arsons, riots, rapes and abduction. The scale upon which these incidents took place was gigantic. More than ten million people had to emigrate from either part of the Panjab to the other. All sorts of pains and privations befell them during the course of this emigration. More than two lakh persons were killed and about fifty thousand women were raped and abducted for that matter.

In an effort to communicate this phylogenetic aspect of life, Amrita Pritam brings the motifs related to it in the foreground but appropriates in the background motifs relating to the ontogenetic aspect of life deriving from *Heer Waris*. By delineating the passionate love-tale of Heer and Ranjha, Waris Shah questioned the system of marriage through kinship that denied to lovers the experience of love-making. Along with that was raised an objection with regard to the priestly class that forbade marriage through love and sanctioned the one through kinship.

This appropriation is oral in which the present meaning would vary from the past significance. So losing its earlier authority, the oral becomes subordinate to the visual mode. The immanent problematic that it forwards sometimes remains ideological only. After all it was ideology that impelled the visual mode to perceive reality. Its reception is by readers rather than by listeners. In the favourable situation determined by ideological kinship they tend to become listeners as well. But that does not entail a permanent change in them.

## II

The progressive trend has generated experimental, revolutionary and existential trends in recent Panjabi poetry, imparting in the process greater authority to the visual mode. Reduced in its efficacy, the oral mode seems to have lost its veracity though the concomitant effort to rejuvenate it through the subversion of the visual mode, is also there.

Progress registered by Panjab in the material sphere forms the basis of this antithetical development. For the first time in the course of history, the life of the countryside gives evidence of abundance as against scarcity that was its permanent feature in the past. In this respect, the

condition of the peasantry is radically different. It is neither impelled nor compelled to accept historical destiny as natural destiny. As against it, there has arisen of late the tendency to award social and political causes to even natural calamities.

This radical change in ethos has been occasioned by the introduction of industry into the agricultural mode of production. It is a positive phenomenon at the material level because it replaces age-old tools with those of a far greater productive potential. Moreover, barter-type relations have been replaced by market-relations. Even the traditional type of corporate relation between the peasant and the artisan has changed into a new professional relation of interest and profit. In short, this factor from below has brought so much material change in the life of the countryside in a few decades that it can measure up to the change that the factor from above had caused in the course of several centuries.

With this change, the countryside has got close to the city leading to the increasing urbanization of life. Rather than even growth, this urbanization marks uneven expansion. Lived experience of this uneven expansion generates the feeling of alienation that coupled with migration has resulted in the feeling of self-alienation. Common amongst the sensitive persons of the upper and the middle classes, it is not uncommon with those of the lower classes also who look at it with a feeling of emulation.

All this denotes a radical change in social reality that is reflected in and signified through Panjabi poetry of the recent times. Occasioning a corresponding change in its grasp, this social reality has established the primacy of the visual mode in the production and reception of Panjabi poetry. As professed by Harbhajan Singh in *Sarak de Saffe te* (On the Pages of the Road), *Main jo Beet Gia* (I whom am Left Behind) and *Ne Dhupe ne Chhavan* (Neither in Sunlight nor in Shade), Jaswant Singh Neki in *Smriti de Kiran ton Pehlan* (Before Memory Vanishes) and S.S. Misha in *Churasta* (Crossroads), the experimental poets subject social and cultural contradictions to under-determination at the same time that they project individual and sexual contradictions as overdetermined.

Much as the votaries of Sigmund Freud in perception and T.S. Eliot in technique, they regard urbanization and industrialization as sources of alienation and self-alienation. To reflect them as such, they take to the situational perception of reality. The incidents, experiences and relations employed by them have no background in the past or foreground in the future. Obviously they emphasize the negative aspect of life and in the

process come up with an ahistorical view of it. No wonder the relation between the poet who is prior to the poem, the persona that is within it and the reader who is beyond it, becomes formal. With its monologic form and ambiguous utterance, this poetry seeks to impress through its technical virtuosity.

Self-suppression and its rationalization held valid in Freud's depth-psychology become evident from the following poem by Harbhajan Singh :

Your body is bliss at its best  
 It is like fire glimmering in the bare mirror,  
 You alone sit in the room.  
 Bereft of warmth and light.  
 Is it that your picture  
 Has come out of the frame ?  
 How graceful it is !  
 Neither shall I steal this fire  
 Nor take it to the world below,  
 Fire that burns not in the hearth,  
 Fire that warms not the bed,  
 Fire that brightens not the way,  
 What can one do with that !  
 Cold without one do with that !

In this poem, the everyday world is rendered mysterious forgetting in the process that mystery can be penetrated only to the degree it is recognized in the everyday world by virtue of what Walter Benjamin calls "dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday"<sup>5</sup>. The impenetrable here is the cultural context, an aversion to which makes experimental poetry abstract, intricate and negative. No wonder this poetry seems to transplant some alien experience. Since alien experience and alien words are educative in their right, this poetry educates formally and stylistically though its formal and stylistic complexity does not reflect an orientation towards feelings and emotions.

This orientation regenerates with the poetry written under the impact of the Naxalite movement. Owing its inception to the Naxalite movement, the revolutionary trend advocated particularly by Avtar Singh Pash in *Udhde Bajaan Magar* (After the Flying Hawks) and *Saade Samian Vich* (In our Times) goes beyond the signification of violence. For annihilating the negative phenomena from life, the poet advocates the ideals of the Sikh heroes and martyrs. Viewing them as eternal paradigms of revolutionary thought and practice, he subjects the historical subject-

matter to a visual mode for deriving a permanent truth-content from it. Disposed to focus, he employs paradox and ambiguity in an abundant measure. The praxis that he advocates in life is meant to subvert the visual mode but it, as yet, does not go in for the rejuvenation of the oral mode in poetry.

At its best the poetry of Pash provides an example of a multiple nexus of contradictions. The following poem addressed to Darona Charya at the manifest and the education system at the latent level may be quoted in support of this contention :

Things would have been different, my mentor  
 If taking me as a *Bhil* boy  
 You had amputated my thumb then ...  
 In National Cadet Corps  
 It was you who taught me to handle the rifle,  
 To press the trigger on the foe  
 When the motherland is in danger.  
 Now when danger lurks over the motherland  
 My mentor !  
 You have gone to the side of Daryodans,  
 Your benediction will carry no effect,  
 The first stroke will carry away them all  
 Things would have been different,  
 If taking me as a *Bhil* boy  
 You had amputated my thumb then ...

The existential trend available in Surjit Patar's *Hawa Vich Likhe Harf* (Words Inscribed in the Air) tries to award experiential proportions to experiment, more or less technical in poetry bearing the same epithet. These experimental proportions then try to posit a dialogic relation with the cultural and social factors. This double effort enables the poet to employ the filmic techniques of flash-back, close-up and profile at the literary level. The following poem is an example of all this in which a bridge comments upon the comment made about him by the passers-by :

When they went across me,  
 I learnt that about me  
 They had this comment to make –  
 Where has lagged behind  
 That reticent man ?  
 We knew it before  
 He lacks persistence.

Here individual experience is perceived through public perception compris-

ing distant shot in the first and close-up in the second part. In the long poem about the present turmoil in Panjab, the poet perceives public experience through individual perception. Beginning as a question addressed by the speaker to himself as "How should I extinguish this smouldering fire in the jungle?" the poem gives evidence to the same effort.

This double effort helps the poet to employ the visual mode to subvert it. It is because for him the present with all its negative factors determines the social reality without being identical with the whole flux of time. That this subversion may work towards the rehabilitation of the oral mode in its new form in the future is something to be predicted. This prediction is possible to make because in all ages there has been past and future of the present.

That this prediction is viable enough is borne out by the societal and feminist concerns being shown of late in modern Panjabi poetry. Best expressed by Swrajbir in *Apni Apni Raat* (One's own Night), the societal concern seeks to perceive human life in its wholeness as almost an ecological phenomenon. Perceiving it as such, this poetry articulates the deadlock that human life, in diachronic and synchronic terms, seems to have reached at this juncture. The following poem provides an eloquent articulation to such a sort of perception :

None may thus sweep away  
The henna of our hands.

In water and heaven  
Earth and fire  
Survives our memory –  
Beyond which is there  
Neither man nor his foundation.

Death is waiting –  
Beyond which survive  
Neither the signs of time  
And nor the breaths of life,  
There only death resides  
Issuing from lamentation  
The noise of animals  
Gone demented in blood.

None may, however, weep  
As we do  
Wordless, abashed, sans dignity.



As a correlative of the societal concern, the feminist concern articulates the deadlock that, in diachronic and synchronic terms, the male-female relation is face to face at this juncture. The genesis of this concern can be traced to Amrita Pritam who, with folkloric simplicity, sought to express the evanescence of the pleasure-principle, particularly under the burden of the reality-principle disposed to demolish it by taking woman from the unmarried to the married state. This problem however grows into a problematic in the poetry of Manjit Pal. Available in *Ret da Samundar* (Ocean of Sand), her poetry shows how beyond resolution is the dilemma of male-female relation that, as a problem, has looked within resolution in the course of human life :

“How can salvation be possible ?” she asked,  
 “With Love”, replied the Buddha,  
 And then silence engrossed him.  
 Extending to limitless regions  
 Of subject to object and object to subject  
 Her quest got moulded into the female body.  
 Primeval weapons of sex and sense  
 Hacked it interminably to pieces.  
 In parent’s courtyard  
 And bridegroom’s bridal bed  
 Reception was accorded to the bare body  
 That otherwise is the soul’s veil only.  
 Trudging of long journey with tired feet  
 Has not made perfect existence possible.  
 Far beyond is Love’s destination  
 That forwards the body as a temple.  
 It is human destiny to be hopeful  
 This is inherited indeed  
 From numerous births and deaths.

The literary production of this deadlock in societal and feminist texts registers its reception and effect with the reading public that in the socio-political and historico-cultural contexts is swayed by the identity sought by Panjab in terms of region and language. Their startling coincidence is symptomatic of the enhanced role the oral and visual modes play to perceive the contexts in terms of societal and feminist concerns and structure them, howsoever indirectly, into literary texts.

## NOTES

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- 1 Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London : Flamingo – 8th Impression, 1984), p. 129. As he makes it clear, the term comprises experience past and experience present. Whereas the former suggests processes of consideration, reflection and analysis, the latter hints at unquestionable authenticity and immediacy. Further detail may be seen in *The Long Revolution, Marxism and Literature* and *Towards 2000* by the same author.
- 2 Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Newark, N. J. : Princeton University Press, 1968, Reprint), p. 23. The contrast that the author draws between the Greco-Roman and the Biblical traditions basically holds valid for that between the oral and the visual modes. To develop it further, Walter Benjamin's writings, particularly "The Work of Art in the Era of Reproducibility", seem most useful.
- 3 Antonio Labriola, *Materialistic Conception of History* (Chicago : Chicago University Press, 1907), p. 207. The author holds nature's persistence in life as permanent. Without challenging this valuable contention, it may be held that this permanence varies in people who process orientation either for or against history.
- 4 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1968), p. 318.
- 5 Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p. 190.

# THE RISE OF 'THE MODERN' AND THE DECLINE OF THE LONG POEM IN TELUGU LITERATURE

C. SUBBARAO

There seems to be a peculiar sort of relationship between the rise of 'the modern' and the decline of the 'long poem'. Call it death or dearth or give it a more theoretical base by invoking the dissociation of sensibility, the fact remains that there are very few long poems worthy of being placed by the side of the *maha kavya* of old with its architectonic power, magnitude and unity of action. The survival of these features even in an attenuated form is rare. What we see is the vanishing or withering away of these features. What has happened to the sensibility of modern man that he should be incapable of producing a long poem ? Or are there not instances of a rare poet succeeding ?

No poet worth his salt could resist the temptation to try his hand at a LONG POEM. We have in English innumerable instances of poets who despaired of writing a long poem. We have as many who conceived and executed with a sureness of touch and purpose. For each Milton, we could show a Keats. But even among those who have made the attempt, we find a want of architectonic power. In Telugu we have a Nannaya, a Tikkana and a Pothana, a Surana and our last romantic Viswanatha. They could confidently claim in their prefatory verses their nominal intentions which are made good in the body of the poem. It is very rarely that they missed the target. In this context, it is appropriate to raise this question of the long poem, the *maha kavya* in the modern age. Very few can claim to have written one. And the few that have made the attempt fail to make the grade. Many are called but few are chosen. When we examine a select list of these long poems in Telugu, what do we find ? In spite of the often confusing, even contradictory impulses that went into the making of modernism, few would dispute the claim that there is a subtle continuity between the romantic and the modern. That a complete and total break with the past is the chief criterion of modern art is relevant only in so far as it helps us to estimate the new and original without subjecting it to norms of old. Even a complete break could be regarded as a radical deviation from the earlier norms. That the modern is under new pressures, is under strain cannot be denied. Continuity and change are the primary laws that seem to guide the destinies of art throughout the ages. The story of art is made in terms of a periodic violation of earlier norms. Ever since the romantic poet became his own 'subject',

ever since Wordsworth discovered the true subject in terms of the growth of the poet's mind, a new perceptual grammar, a new way of understanding the subject-object disposition is available to the poet. Also a progressive inwardness, internalization or interiorization is seen as the hallmark of modern writing. The poet is his own hero, his own subject-matter.

The emergence of modernism in Telugu literature may be said to start from 1900 or about the time Gurazada Appa Rao published his poems and the play *Kanyasulkam*. He was the first to introduce a new idiom and a new way of writing in Telugu. But it was his heir Sri Sri, born in 1910 around the time of the death of Gurazada, who performed the last mutation of idiom and versification which made possible a new poetry. It would be appropriate to call Sri Sri the *vaithalika* because he could move away from the seductions of a stereo-typical muse, the conventional *kavisamayasa*. It was a programmatic choice which initiated a new mode of apprehension and expression in Telugu. In this brief reference to an important turn or milestone in the evolution of Telugu letters I should not fail to mention all those poets who were greatly influenced by the English romantics and who were known as *bhava kavulu*. They were able to successfully continue the romantic strain of the *prabandhas* without following the metrical conventions of the precursors. That they were original in the treatment of the subject-matter, there can be no doubt. A writer like Nanduri Venkata Subba Rao revived a whole genre of the folk ballad in the characters of *Yenki* and *Naidu bava*. Whatever of the English poets Nanduri read, he assimilated them to such a degree that we would not be able to detect any traces of the English romantics, except perhaps as an intangible thing. The creative crossfertilization seen in the manner in which these poets were influenced by western writers is one thing—perhaps, it is a desirable sort of encounter with a new literature. But the choice made by a writer like Sri Sri is decisive because we find here a new sensibility which sought an alteration of expression. Hence, the rise of the modern and modern poetry is associated with the era of Sri Sri and he is called the *yugakarthā*.

The implications of a gradual internalization or what may be called a progressive inwardness can be seen in Sri Sri's poetic manifesto *Kavitha ! O Kavitha !* It is a poem in which the poet's quest for identity, his struggle to achieve self-definition, his anxiety contributes to a productive hostility with tradition, with what usually passes off as poetry. The poem enacts the very birth of a new poet, the modern Telugu poet, a poet who makes

a decisive choice not to follow the footsteps of the past masters. It would be instructive here to compare Sri Sri with another poet called Viswanatha Sathyanarayana who works out his salvation within the hallowed tradition of Telugu poetic conventions. Tradition for Viswanatha is a precious inheritance and for Sri Sri tradition is a burden. Both poets show an acute sense of self-consciousness. But in the manner in which they discover their identities, we find one heralding modernity and we find another continuing, renewing, the roots of the age-old poetic tradition.

Where a poet working within the framework of age-old conventions could succeed in writing a long poem, why does the modern poet fail in the task of writing a long poem? It is permissible to ask whether time-tested conventions alone could give the necessary magnitude and strength to the long poem. Also, it is necessary to seek an answer to the question whether the long poem is not merely difficult, but impossible in modern times. In the words of Bradley: "It has become impossible not because we can not write it, but because we see that we ought not. And, in truth, it never was written. The thing called a long poem was really, as any long poem must be, a number of short ones, linked together by passages of prose. And these passages could be nothing except prose; for poetry is the language of a state of crisis, and a crisis is brief. The long poem is an offence to art." We have had our share of *prabandhas*, transcreated epics or *maha kavyas*, also loosely structured episodic narratives, heroic lays etc. But with the emergence of the lyric, norm and the preference for the short form, be it the song, lyric *gita*, *geya*, short story, a whole new type is made available for the writer. The choice is open. It is not a fact that the *maha kavya* of today is the prose narrative, a hold-all wherein you could deploy all types of narrative devices without being obliged to be either ancient or modern or be both at one and the same time. I guess it is related to the romantic and also the democratization of literature and other forms of life and institutions. Any one could do it, not just the *literati*, the *cognoscenti*. Also it is related to the passing away of patrons. Although we have the academies and the Jnanpith, even these also valorize the long poem, or the long work. Is it easier for the older poet to produce a long work? Conversely, is it impossible to produce a long work in modern times? How do we explain the dearth or death of a genre? or do we have to wait for genius to flower to surprise us? or do we have to look for the long only in terms of prose fiction?

Here I wish to cite the instance of one long poem written by Nagna-

muni to which one of our serious students of Telugu gave a long introduction. While introducing the poem, a claim is made that *Koyya Gurram* (The Wooden Horse) is a modern *maha kavya* and that it possesses certain qualities which make it eligible for this title. A definition is also given. Very rightly the critic sets aside magnitude as the criterion as also other criteria of the *ālaṃkārika* tradition like descriptions, figures of speech and so on. What is considered important, even fundamental, is the Longinean norm of subject-matter plus a vision and a wide range of feelings and moods, and an appropriate length, or magnitude. The immediate occasion of the poem of the Wooden Horse is the catastrophic cyclonic storm that hit the Divi Seema during November 1977. And Nagnamuni is no mean poet in Telugu. The poem is powerful as it is always the case with Nagnamuni. It is serious as it is usual with Nagnamuni. It is charged with deep irony as it is unique with Nagnamuni. Both the mood and the mode in the poem relate to the elegiac and the primary voice speaks in accents of deep sorrow and anguish. The poet starts doubting the power of the word, even as he exploits its potentialities to suggest the several *lies* that condition one's existence. In looking for *the one* truth which makes meaning of life, the poet completes his elegy on the death of Man, on the death of creativity and on the death of all that is vital in life.

I have not come across a plotless poem of this magnitude anywhere in recent writing in Telugu. It does have a wide canvas ; it has some telling images ; it has the symbol of the wooden horse itself stalking the poem. But yet I am not in a position to endorse totally what our critic put forward in the introduction. For me it is a strangely disquieting experience. And this, notwithstanding my admiration for Nagnamuni.

We have another instance of an attempt at a long poem by C. Narayana Reddy. He calls this *Viswambhara* with the subtitle *Samagra-kavya* i.e., integral kavya or integrated kavya. Even here the canvas is as wide as the universe and Man is the hero of this poem. Man appears in a variety of roles each marking a definite stage in the evolution. Narayana Reddy offers a running commentary on the ascent of man in rhymed couplets. The poetic voice betrays no anxiety and sings in praise of man's daring voyage of discovery. The work has attracted world-wide attention and it has been given a number of awards. But yet, even this poem leaves me with a strangely disquieting experience.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SALMAN RUSHDIE

JAIDEV

... – so here [Aadam Aziz Sinai] was, despite [Europeans'] presence in his head, attempting to re-unite himself with an earlier self which ignored their influence but knew everything it ought to have known ... – But it was no good, he was caught in a strange middle ground ...

In India, we've always been vulnerable to Europeans.... – Perhaps it would be fair to say that Europe repeats itself, in India, as farce.

– *Midnight's Children*<sup>1</sup>

Salman Rushdie is an expatriate writer and writes in “a foreign tongue” which some would see as “wrapped around you like a flag.”<sup>2</sup> To the possible charge that an outsider-trespasser like him can speak only lies about us, Rushdie retorts with two questions in *Shame*: “is history to be considered the property of the participants only? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories?” (p. 28) As for his foreign, forked tongue, he invokes Omar Khayyam, that ‘known-in-translation’, irreverent 12th century poet who lends his name to Rushdie’s anti-hero. Like the Persian poet, “I, too am a translated man. I have always been *borne across*. It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion – and use, in evidence, the success of Fitzgerald-Khayyam – that something can also be gained.” (S, p. 29) Finally, about his being an expatriate, he admits, “I am forced to reflect [the native] world in fragments of broken mirrors.” (S, p. 69) He quotes Milan Kundera on the importance of one’s national and cultural memory, but also adds that given his snapshot perceptions of his old countries, he is forced to be a palimpsest figure, somewhat like Pakistan. Pakistan is a palimpsest because its made-to-order history is the creation of its ‘shameful’ rulers whose fantasy has sought to rub out the original, Indian parts. Rushdie feels like a palimpsest because imposing an outside (outsider’s) vision over his past and native countries comes naturally to him. And though an expatriate is not exactly an outsider, his perceptions, vision and fantasy tend to be different than an insider’s. In *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, Rushdie addresses himself to the Indian subcontinent, its maddening realities, its psyche and superstitions, its scandals and shames. But always, he portrays them from a special angle, the nature of his special perceptions and vision constituting this angle. It will be my effort in this paper to relate this angle to Rushdie’s extremely self-conscious transactions with ‘outside’ narrative models and influences.

To return to the expatriate issue, Rushdie is clear about what expatriation implies. It implies both gains and losses. The losses relate to the dreadful possibility of losing one's connexions, one's memories, of finding that one's case is emptied of native goods. An expatriate writer, like Aadam Aziz Sinai, can find himself caught in a middle ground where everything turns tentative, uncertain. Worse still, he can find that his past, his cultural threads, have slipped away from his fingers. But there are gains as well. In a lecture, Rushdie has warned that "There is indeed nothing in an expatriate writer's predicament which should be a matter for pity ; Indian writers in England have access to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history.... Swift, Conrad, Marx are as much our literary forebears as Tagore or Ram Mohan Roy."<sup>8</sup> This, I think, is the greatest advantage of the middle ground ; and since for the most part this paper will focus on the ways in which western fiction has influenced Rushdie's strategies and stance, his special angle, it is only appropriate to issue here the cautionary word that it is not my intention to suggest that with him the Indian 'forebears' happen to be any the less important. In fact, with Indian writing in English in general and with expatriate writers in particular, literary relations operate in a dialectical manner, and if for any reason the dialectic is disrupted, literature suffers. I shall return to the issue later on. Here, let it be added that a novel like *Midnight's Children* could have been written only from outside India, not from inside. India has this tendency to split up when she is watched from within ; she becomes India only when one looks at her from a distance, from the middle ground, which suggests another gain of expatriation.

Rushdie has remarked that given cultural displacement and uncertainties, an Indian writer in England has modernism forced on him. Now whatever else the term modernism implies, it implies, in the first place, self-consciousness. Reading Rushdie, it is impossible not to notice self-consciousness which come out through his protagonists (even though they do not leave the subcontinent), his style, and his narration. It is here, in this self-consciousness, that his special angle gets manifested most vividly. Also, this self-consciousness can be described as his most important contribution to the Indian novel in English. Except for a book like *All About H. Hatterr*, the tradition of Indian novel in English has refused to face up to the problematics of form and language. The result has been a rather native, uncritical acceptance of western narrative forms and tech-



niques, and an equally naive assumption that English as the chosen medium of narration creates no special situation vis-a-vis the novelist's material. One would think that the very use of English by an Indian writer mocks out any unself-conscious pose ; literary relations are implicit in the very medium of Indian writing in English, but the fascinating problematics of the language has usually been evaded by our writers with whom English fails to get into line with the Indian material. Consequently, the language tends to be modelled on, say, the language of a Lawrence or a Virginia Woolf ; or else, it gets too much like the translation of Indian languages. Rushdie's resolution of the problematics is not the only possible one, but as it is, it is viable, non-evasive, impressive. He begins with the sound assumption that though the use of English by an Indian writer cannot be an innocent exercise, its problematics can be incorporated within the novel form ; thus it can mean some gains. These gains will be the gains of translation. Translation can, of course, become an indulgence, a fetish, and at places Rushdie too gives way to its fetishistic charms. But on the whole he seems to adhere to young African writers in English : "I submit that those who can do the work of extending the frontiers of English so as to accommodate African thought-patterns must do it through their mastery of English and not out of innocence."<sup>4</sup> Rushdie's mastery of English is absolute ; he plays with it like a master juggler. So complete is his control over it that it takes in all that he wants to convey, and that includes Indian thought-patterns, Indian speech-patterns, and Indian social peculiarities. More important still, he manages his English with extreme self-consciousness, thus acknowledging that the original speeches or thoughts are not available in English, that these have been translated by him. The language is thus placed at a middle ground and partakes both of English style and native peculiarities. These peculiarities defamiliarize the medium and point to the self-consciousness in Rushdie's use of the language : "Catch your ears" ; "Accept don't accept" ; "spitting in the eyes of fate" ; "For what your begums want this lock-shock now" ; "Wife, this government is going to the bathroom all over us" ; and a hundred other phrases are woven into the texture as Indian touches beside the normal, alien literary style. Equally impressive is Rushdie's translated mimicry of Indian community gossip : "O God, a grown man in love with a little child. Eduardo and Farah – what do you mean it can't happen, happens every day, only a few years back there was that other – yes, that must be it, these Christians are big

perverts, God preserve us, he follows his little floozy up here to the backyard of the universe, and who knows what encouragement she gives, because a woman knows how to tell a man if he is wanted or not wanted, of course, even at eight years old, these things are in the blood.” (*S*, p. 48) The syntax is disturbed, the phrases are peculiar (the backyard of the universe, at eight years old), and so on, but a whole pattern of Indian speech-habits gets successfully evoked. Indianisms are pervasive in Rushdie, but even without them his language accommodates Indian thought or feeling patterns. Especially in his use of translated mimicry, the language becomes a major means of characterizing his all-too-numerous secondary and peripheral figures. Many such figures are rendered through speech peculiarities, and invariably these remind us of Dickens or Amis. Consider for example Amina Aziz, Aadam’s slightly eccentric, Kashmiri wife: “I tell you whatsitsname, it’s those photos in the paper. I wrote—didn’t I write?—no good would come of that. Photos take away pieces of you. My God, whatsitsname, when I saw your picture, you had become so transparent I could see the writing from the other side coming right through your face!” (*MC*, pp. 163-64) Again and again, the language in Rushdie keeps pointing on the one hand to the original, Indian material and on the other to the mimicry style that the language adopts. Such a resolution of the language problematics presupposes self-consciousness, and its middle ground appears to be a far more satisfactory proposition than either ‘innocence’, fetishism or pale imitations of western authors.

A similar double awareness operates in Rushdie’s fiction at the generic, narrational and thematic levels. The jottings one scrawls on the margins of his pages frequently relate to intertextuality and begin with the word compare. To the making of Rushdie the novelist, many traditions and authors have contributed. Fairy tales, Persian and Arabic adventure tales, allegory, religious epics, Islamic ‘assemblies’ and battle-day narratives, Gothic fiction, Revenge tragedy, science fiction and fabulation form the backdrop against which his novelistic activity proceeds, and reading his fiction involves listening to the echoes of several masters of fiction: Sterne, Dickens, Tolkien, Gogol, Kafka, Grass, Kundera, Garcia Marquez, and so on. The grand backdrop or the voices from it do not coerce him into slavish imitation which is a form of surrender; and this by itself tells us something about the innate strength of Rushdie. Influences, debts, even imitation—all these are there in him, and often these are openly acknowledged. But these do not use Rushdie; he uses them. It is easy to see

that without *The Tin Drum* before it, *Midnight's Children*—and without *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* before it, *Shame*—could not find the shapes they eventually took. But the drive behind Rushdie's fiction is both towards enclosing the past and towards advancing it. The logic which relates influence to dependency and then both to weakness has no relevance to his fiction. The only logic relevant to it is the modernist logic according to which the past has to be presented, consciously retrieved, for interrogation and updating. Needless to add, this kind of use of the past has to be a very self-conscious enterprise in which influences are not blindly taken on, but are examined carefully vis-a-vis the overall purpose of one's writing.

History is the subject-matter of Rushdie both in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*. Ambitious as this is, Rushdie's project also involves demythologizing history, separating the mythologized, motivated versions from what really is history, involves, in other words, a highly political and even subversive stance. The final reference in the novels is not so much to a dead objectivity as to a personal need in the expatriate to make sense of the past, his past, his roots. These roots are Indian and therefore no amount of rational, surgical, factual data can succeed in capturing the flavour or logic of the land of his roots. Hence, he wisely decides to juxtapose realism and modes that are mythical, allegorical and fabulistic. Realism, used purely, can break a writer's heart, if the writer's subject is India. And yet history by its very nature demands realism. So on the one hand, in *Midnight's Children*, we have fabulistic characters like Tai the ageless in Kashmir or Tai Bibi the most ancient whore in Pakistan, and on the other hand we have the protagonist narrator goading himself to acknowledge the clock time: "The time matters too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world." (p. 3) On the one hand, true to the Indian habit of mythification, Indira Gandhi becomes a destructive deity, the Widow; on the other hand, she is reduced to a bad, cruel joke, what with her part-white, part-black hair which is made to serve as an analogy for India's economy. Similarly, facts about the Bangladesh war are juxtaposed with the hero's atavistic, fantastic adventures in the Sunderbans. Examples can be multiplied, but already, I think, the point has become clear: Rushdie does not superimpose a factitious, alien perception

on India or Indian history ; in fact, he brings a fine double perception, a perception which surrenders to the genius of the country but in the process also tackles India and her history with his West-influenced attitudes and habits. The result is a *chutney* at the mode level. And if the hero Saleem Sinai, like Oskar Matzerath in *The Tin Drum*, is a freak-clairvoyant, thought-penetrator, with a nose that is a miracle – his fairy-tale faculties are all a necessity here, necessary for the purpose of tackling a whole subcontinent and a whole history. The purpose therefore is the first thing and all the strategies and tricks which Rushdie employs here are best appreciated in the light of his epic purpose.

This epic purpose helps one in grasping the pattern of Rushdie's transactions with the western influences at various levels. So vast and complicated is the subject of influences on Rushdie that it is impossible to deal with it in a paper of this length. The task becomes especially complicated when one remembers that the influences themselves are not neatly isolable ; indeed, a number of these come refracted from between themselves. If one talks of the influence of Milan Kundera on Rushdie, how does one accommodate the fact of influences on Kundera himself ? Kafka and Gogol are two obvious influences on Rushdie, but Gogol influenced Kafka, Kafka influenced Grass, and Grass influenced Kundera. What is more, the kind of influence they wield on Rushdie is intertwined with numerous other childhood, native ones. This is not a unique phenomenon, and any discussion of influence and literary relations must acknowledge the impossibility of neatly fixing A as the influence on B or of even discounting the intersubjectivity factor. In the rest of the paper, I focus on only three major contemporary novelists' influence on Rushdie – largely because these are writers whose influence is most perceptible on Rushdie and partly because Rushdie shares with these writers a common central purpose.

Garcia Marquez is easily the most important influence on Rushdie. This is perhaps because there are many affinities between him and Garcia Marquez. In him, Rushdie finds what he is looking for, namely a most comprehensive, composite mode capable of accommodating various kinds of reality and fantasy. *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are both grimly realistic at places, but usually they violate the realistic mode and swing sharply towards fabulation and irrationalism. In *Midnight's Children* the narrative frame provides for a historical and realistic treatment of Indian history from 1915 to the late 1970s. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is

similarly concerned with the history of the Buendia family which offers an analogy to the fate of Latin American countries. Both Garcia Marquez and Rushdie write subversive fiction but the texture of their fiction is composed of motifs from myth, magic tales, legends, allegory and fantastic adventure tales. They both use a mixed mode in which anything can happen, from realistic to fantastic. In *Shame*, too, fable, fairy tale, allegory, farce are juxtaposed with realism and history. The presence of a number of identical motifs in Rushdie and Garcia Marquez justifies the view that the latter must have been a model to Rushdie. There is a Marquezian solitude that engulfs Ahmed Sinai after the government freezes all his assets (*MC*, p. 241); as in "Innocent Erendira", in *Shame* the Loo assumes the status of a wind of misfortune; and like the ghost of Prudencio Aguilar in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the growing dead boy in "The Third Resignation"<sup>5</sup>, in both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* there are ghosts who continue to age and decay; miracles, exaggerations, animating the inanimate, poll rigging, telepathy, normalizing the non-normal, etc are other identical motifs in Garcia Marquez and Rushdie. More important than the identical motifs is the fact that like Garcia Marquez, Rushdie writes furiously fast narratives in which there is little room for elaborate descriptions or dialogue but in which each sentence rushes the reader past a series of incidents. Like Garcia Marquez, Rushdie aims at captivating the reader, holds him under a spell as it were, whets his curiosity to the breaking point with the help of several "Count-downs". They both put a high premium on narrational skill and compare their role as similar to a juggler's (Garcia Marquez has described himself as a prestidigitator, Rushdie a juggler with facts). Like Garcia Marquez, Rushdie sustains the reader's curiosity by cleverly concealing significant segments of truth while giving some others which prove to be right but not in the way one expected them to be right. The first sentence of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* provides information that is strictly right but still misleading: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice." (p. 9) The sentence introduces a cunning, misleading detail, then abruptly wrenches the narrative away from the postulated context to turn it backward. Rushdie also resorts to such strategies almost in every chapter of his novels. He offers delayed, fragmented expositions, mixes the contexts and fractures chronology: "The day before they passed the sentence of death Iskander Harappa

would be permitted to telephone his daughter for one minute exactly.... Even in his playboy period Isky felt bad about his sequestered wife.... After the death of Isky Harappa, Rani and Arjumand Harappa were kept locked up in Mohenjo for several years...." (S, p. 107) Within half a page, the narrative swings between three different time segments, not telling the reader the whole truth about any of them, and thus keeping him waiting. Indeed, like García Marquez's abrupt, at times confounding, time and voice shifts in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, Rushdie introduces sentences in which more than one voice and time segment function almost simultaneously, so that the reader has to mark off clauses under Time/Voice 1, Time/Voice 2, and Time/Voice 3 (MC, pp. 15-17). Time in Rushdie is like time in García Marquez: a very unsteady affair; it can be gained, lost, forgotten, fragmented, linearized, turned cyclical.

Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* constitutes so extended an influence on *Midnight's Children* that it is doubtful if the latter novel could have discovered its present form without the former having been there. There is much clear imitation of *The Tin Drum* in *Midnight's Children*, but imitation here is purposeful. Given the self-assigned task of tackling Indian history from 1915 onwards, Rushdie clearly needed an epic form and a protagonist who would not be subject to the human limitations of time and space, a fantastic protagonist whose private sufferings and predicament would mirror the nation's career as an independent country. *The Tin Drum* provided the appropriate form and a model protagonist. Oskar Matzerath's story beginning with his grandparents encompasses and parallels the history of Poland and Germany, and since he is a miracle child, a clairaudient dwarf capable of thought-penetration and drumming his and others' way to their childhood, this protagonist survives to write his memoirs. In Oskar too, the drive is to retrieve the conveniently-forgotten past: "I tried like everyone else, to make allowance for my ignorance—the ignorance which came into style in those years and which even today quite a few of our citizens wear like a jaunty and oh, so becoming a little hat."<sup>6</sup> Oskar does not forget, and his drumming is a means of keeping the past fresh and alive to his audience. His effort is to counter the hangover of "the postwar binge": "one symptom of this hangover is that the deeds and misdeeds which only yesterday were fresh and alive, are reduced to history and explained as such." (TD, pp. 428-29) Grass's portrayal of this "tearless century" provides a suitable model for Rushdie's project of depicting the betrayal of *Midnight's Children* by their parents and leaders.

Like *The Tin Drum*, *Midnight's Children* begins in the present but soon swings back to Saleem's grandmother. Like Oskar, Saleem is a miracle child who can hear across the nation and sense thoughts and emotions ; like Oskar's, Saleem's future is tied up inextricably with the future of his country. Both *The Tin Drum* and *Midnight's Children* have much parental confusion and their protagonists are products of adultery. Incest, polarization (between Goethe and Rasputin in one, and Saleem [peace] and Shiva [destruction] in the other), guilt, miracles, passion for order and fear of absurdity, rubbing shoulders with history, and childhood nostalgia are attendant motifs both with Oskar and Saleem. At the level of form, too, the two novels are fairly similar, being memoirs written in presence of an insided audience-figure, Padma in *Midnight's Children* and Bruno the keeper in *The Tin Drum*. There is much self-reflexivity and parody of fairy tales. In "Faith, Hope, Love", one of the most moving and ironical scenes, fairy tale expositions are lyrically used to depict the terrifying, topsy-turvy values of fascism : a musician named Meyn was celebrated for his part in anti-semitic orgies but is now expelled from the party when he tries to kill four tomcats. In *Midnight's Children*, we have similar parodic subversions of fairy tale motifs : "Once upon a time, in the far northern principedom of Kif, there lived a prince who had two beautiful daughters, a son of equally remarkable good looks, a brand-new Rolls Royce motor car, and excellent political contacts." (MC, p. 382)

The strategy of depicting history is identical in *The Tin Drum* and *Midnight's Children*. History is juxtaposed with familial or private crises so that the juxtaposition serves the defamiliarizing function and turns the presentation farcical, ironical and grotesque. On the day the Great War ends, in *Midnight's Children*, "Naseem developed the longed-for headache" (MC, pp. 24-25), and the whole logic of the 1965 Indo-Pak War is revealed to be the elimination of the protagonist's family. In *The Tin Drum*, too, "While history, blaring special communiques at the top of its lungs, sped like a well-greased amphibious vehicle over the roads and waterways of Europe and through the air as well, conquering everything in its path, my own affairs, which were restricted to the belabouring of lacquered toy drum, were in a bad way." (TD, p. 252) This kind of 'epic breath' ("to mention military victories and bedroom triumphs in the same breath" [TD, p. 299]) is common to both Grass and Rushdie. However, it creates a problem with regard to the presentation of history. Since the foregrounding is constantly on the personal voice and the private situations,



history itself, though present, becomes prone to being overlooked or ignored. The danger of 'playing' with history through an odd, personal voice is that it, the voice, can reduce the history to a joke ; the danger, in other words, is that instead of being demythologized, history can be replaced by another, highly eccentric, myth. A good reader will keep shifting the focus to pick up the historically significant data from the playful fantasy, but still a colourful, engaging fabulist hero can lead to the dilution of the public, historical impulse behind the novel. The kind of protagonist-narrator we find in *The Tin Drum* and *Midnight's Children* is frequently on the verge of turning the novel into a fine performance — and that can hardly be the purpose of Grass or Rushdie. In this sense, perhaps the choice of narrator-protagonist, though no doubt affording many advantages, can become a liability for a political novelist.

Rushdie's *Shame* is a more effective political novel for the reason that it employs a public, authorial voice for its narration. Fairy tale, fantasy, farce, grotesque comedy, Gothic elements, miracles — all figure in the novel as much as in *Midnight's Children*, but history and politics are not trivialized here simply because the narrator's is a public voice, sane, rational and detached. The happy model is Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. One significant difference between *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* relates to the status of the protagonist. Whereas in *Midnight's Children*, everything, including the narration, is the protagonist's, in *Shame* the protagonists are rather peripheral and always strictly functional. The functional protagonists allow room for the public-voiced narrator who can examine, discuss, and arrive at conclusions from, the historical facts, much as Kundera does in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*.

Both *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* and *Shame* are overtly political in their intent and both work towards their subversive political conclusions through their peripheral protagonists. Kundera's book is "a novel in the form of variations" on Tamina, his expatriate victim-heroine : "Whenever Tamina is absent, it is a novel for Tamina."<sup>7</sup> Tamina represents Czechoslovakia, and like the country, she has been subjected to much abuse by the Russians or their puppets. *Shame* "is a novel about Sufiya Zinobia....Or perhaps it would be more accurate, if also more opaque, to say that Sufiya Zinobia is about the novel." (S, p. 59) Like Tamina, Sufiya is Rushdie's image of what awaits a country whose rulers go on dumping their shames on the weak and vulnerable. Though as



characters the two, Tamina and Sufiya, are different, they are alike in their functions : both stand for the countries, the victim-countries victimized by the ruling groups. And neither Kundera nor Rushdie can find a realistic resolution to their heroines' shame ; each needs a fantasy, fairy story segment to 'end' the story. Sufiya is Pakistan, a miracle gone wrong ; and her fiery end is a vision, a prophecy, for her death coincides with that of her father, mother and husband. Not only this, Kundera's political intrusions into his narrative are an unmistakable model for Rushdie's : there is no satisfactory translation for the Czech word *Litost* which provides the thematic core to the novel ; nor is there a satisfactory translation for the Urdu *Sharam* which, together with its variations, forms the core of *Shame*. In fact, the subversive demystification in Kundera's book finds a very clear echo in *Shame*. Kundera notes with anger and desperation, notes with *litost* : "The first step in liquidating a people ... is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster." (*BLF*, p. 159) The political intrusions in *Shame*, too, are all examples of demystification. The intention is to record all those processes and motivations which culminated in the Pakistan tragedy. One of these is the ruling group's desire to erase Pakistan's Indian past and then write in its place a fictive Islamic history, so that 'the nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was' : "Who commandeered the job of rewriting history ?— The immigrants, the *mohajirs*. In what language ?— Urdu and English, both imported tongues.... It is possible to see the subsequent history of Pakistan as a duel between two layers of time, the obscured world forcing its way back through what-had-been-imposed. It is the true desire of every artist to impose his or her version on the world ; and Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting Palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind...." (*S*, p. 87) Seen from its political side, the novel is addressed to the amnesiac nation, which would turn unreal if it loses its true past, its authentic history. Like his hero Saleem Sinai, Rushdie has written in *Shame* a modern fairy story which is, in fact, history pickled, chutnified, immortalised. A little more optimistic than Kundera, Rushdie explodes the various myths which the rulers have utilized in order to legitimize their shameful rule, and then recommends liberty, equality and fraternity : "Few mythologies survive close exami-

nation, however. And they can become very unpopular indeed if they are rammed down people's throats.... So-called Islamic 'fundamentalism' does not spring, in Pakistan, from the people. It is imposed on them from above.... In the end you get sick of it, you lose faith in the faith, if not *qua* faith then certainly as the basis for a state. And then the dictator falls, and it is discovered that he has brought God down with him, that the justifying myth of the nation has been unmade. This leaves only two options : distintegration, or a new dictatorship ... no, there is a third, [democracy]." (S, p. 251)

It is thus a serious political intent, a serious urge to demystify and demythologize, which is central to both Kundera and Rushdie. To this intent are subordinated all fantasy, magic, games, and fabulation in their works. This intent also explains why, for all her improabable, fantastic proportions and deeds, Sufiya Zinobia has to be rather peripheral ; for she is not so much the novel's *raison d'être* as an engaging means of carrying the reader right into the heart of political darkness. She, though something of a divine idiot in her own right, is actually a sponge that absorbs everyone's shame, crupts into violence when she cannot contain it, and ultimately turns into a destructive panther, a nemesis. She is thus an allegorical figure representing the betrayal and brutalization of the nation itself.

The influence of Garcia Marquez, Kundera and Grass provides further support to the thesis that Rushdie is unique in Indian fiction in English in the sense that he belongs to the postmodernist landscape. A qualification is needed here, though. In his case, the influences are preceded by a careful understanding of his own central purpose, and consequently of what kind of traditions would be of use to him and how. Thus his rejections are no less significant than his chosen models. Broadly, postmodernism has branched off in two contrary directions. One leads to self-conscious, self-reflexive, gamey aestheticism which is highly deflectionary in its ideology : Borges, Nabokov, the later Calvino, Fowles, Barth, and many other represent this direction of postmodernism. Rushdie is fully aware of it but rejects it. The other direction is best represented by Garcia Marquez, Kundera and Grass. Postmodernism with these novelists involves a high degree of self-consciousness and formal awareness, games and tricks, but their fiction subordinates these features to a deep humanistic and political end. Disruptions, fragmentation of chronology, mixed modes, self-reflexivity, and many more postmodernist features characterize Rushdie's fiction, but the epic purpose of demythologizing history is never lost sight of.

Rushdie also rejects both stream of consciousness and other sister techniques *and* existentialism. In fact, the two are interconnected, for the limited, interior point of view is basically an alienated, lonely point of view. It is easy too see why Rushdie has no use for these western offerings. He is conscious of his material, and knows that this material is not susceptible to any alienation themes or techniques. The entire sociology of the subcontinent is against alienation, privacy, individualism. There is no private business ; one thing leads to, gets knotted up with, a hundred others ; even for sex, marital sex, the wives have to wait under the same room for their forty thieves ; community gossip is a nationwide culture. Relations stop nowhere. Accordingly, Rushdie opts for quick brushwork for characterization. Mimicry, a fantastic grasp of sensory details, and an unfailing talent for fixing the character with one or two normal or abnormal behavioural peculiarities, help him tackle the seemingly endless queue of characters. Equally significant is his choice of oral voices for his narratives. In *Midnight's Children*, there are not only addresses to the reader, but also Padma who represents the reader : "...I, to recapture the rapt attention of my revolted Padma Bibi, recount a fairy-tale." (MC, p. 382) And in *Shame* the reader is tricked, and at one place brutally challenged : the subject is Sufiya's dictator father, actually President Zia : "How does a dictator fall ? ...Well, well, I mustn't forget I'm only telling a fairy-story. My dictator will be toppled by goblinish, faery means. 'Makes it pretty easy for you,' is the obvious criticism ; and I agree. But add, even if it does sound a little peevish : 'You try and get rid of a dictator some time'." (S, p. 257) The issue of narrative voice is important for the entire genre of Indian fiction in English, for it seems to me that a fetishistic devotion to alienation techniques has simply not helped our writers with India and her social realities, has indeed resulted in mere imitations of European novels. Europe repeats itself in India as farce, if discriminations are not exercised.

It is necessary to look at the issue of western influences on Rushdie from the native side. It has been shown that he rejects some things in western narrative traditions. There is enough in his practice as a novelist to validate the middle ground idea, to prove that Indian narrative traditions also exercise a pull at him. Like Saleem, Rushdie, despite his Muslim background, is "enough of a Bombayite to be well up in Hindu stories, and actually... very fond of the image of trunk-nosed, flap-eared Ganesh solemnly taking dictation" (MC, p. 177) ; and Bombay is a city

where "Shiva Vishnu Ganesh Ahuramazda Allah and countless others had their flocks" (MC, p. 521). Western influences are important in Rushdie's fiction, but endowed as he is with a formidable composite culture, the influences do not work on a submissive, weak psyche. Of course, ultimately it is to Rushdie's credit that he ensures that the influences from the two directions coalesce. The middle ground, it would seem, is a good ground if one is able to keep standing, watching, absorbing. Perhaps the most important lesson Rushdie holds for all new Indian writers in English relates to the need for Indian fiction not to erase its native legacy while taking on the influence of western traditions. This fiction's redemption lies neither in being oblivious of what is happening to the genre in the West nor in being fashionably contemptuous of what is our own. The middle ground is the best place, but before reaching it one is supposed to have explored deeply one's own native ground. Discriminations are an absolute necessity.

What, then, is the importance of being Salman Rushdie ? It is in his rendering the writing of Indian fiction in English more ambitious and difficult, more history-conscious, more self-conscious. It is in his implicit message that today in order to be significant this fiction has to discard its naivete, has to face up to its problematics, negotiate with all kinds of influences and traditions, and do all this with fine discriminations.

#### NOTES

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1 *Midnight's Children* (1980 ; rpt. New York : Avon Books, 1982), pp. 6, 221. All subsequent references are to this edition, with the abbreviated title (MC) figuring in parenthesis.

2 *Shame* (1983 ; rpt. New Delhi : Rupa, 1983), p. 28. All subsequent references are to this edition, with the abbreviated title (S) figuring in parenthesis.

3 Salman Rushdie's address in Maggie Butcher, ed., *The Eye of the Beholder : Indian Writing in English* (London : Commonwealth Institute, 1983).

4 Chinua Achebe, quoted in Gilbert Phelps, "Two Nigerian Writers : Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka", in *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*, ed. Boris Ford, Vol. 8 : The Present (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1983), p. 330.

5 *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, trans. Gregory Rabassa (1970 ; rpt. London : Picador, 1978), pp. 70, 119 ; "The Third Resignation", *Innocent Erendira and Other Stories*, trans. Gregory Rabassa (1979 ; rpt. London : Picador, 1981), pp. 68-75.

6 *The Tin Drum*, trans. Ralph Manheim (1961 ; rpt. Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1965), p. 252. All subsequent references are to this edition, with the abbreviated title (TD) figuring in parenthesis.

7 *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (1980 ; rpt. Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1983), pp. 165-66. All subsequent references are to this edition, with the abbreviated title (BLF) figuring in parenthesis.

# HINDI DRAMA IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNISM

JASBIR JAIN

Dispensing with the ceremony of trying to justify my choice of a genre which has both extraliterary and extralingual dimensions, I would like to address myself to several questions which worry me (and see whether these can provide a justification). Can language be the basis or a category in drama ; or do we say drama in Hindi and not Hindi drama ? Next, what do we understand by modernism and does it have an Indian manifestation ? Does this manifestation relate to an Indian tradition or not ? These and several other questions crop up when one tries to analyze the dramatic scene in Hindi which defies an easy categorization. No doubt it is a minority art but it has begun to thrust itself on the urban middle class consciousness. Though it lacks any steady professional theatre, yet it appears to be alive and kicking and capable of causing a stir every now and then and generating a lot of interest. It has definitely moved out of the narrow bounds of university dramatic societies, and from the functional goal of entertainment. In dramatic techniques it presents a composite scene with folk and sophisticated methods jostling with each other for attention. In the midst of fresh experiments traditional stylization of the Ramlila and the Krishnalila can make its presence felt. There is a conscious exploring of tradition, both classical and folk.

The question arises : is there a tradition ? The Hindi drama as a literary form was almost non-existent till the mid-19th century,<sup>1</sup> and though there was a theatre, the classical tradition had been distanced by more than a thousand years.<sup>2</sup> But without tradition there can be no self-questioning, perhaps there can be no possibility of relating to the past. Sombhu Mitra once queried whether it was possible to submit to European influences in matters of culture as we have in matters of empirical and technical knowledge.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary art is not an answer to this question, but at several levels it embodies the actual process of this questioning. And perhaps that is why the whole process is painful and painfully slow, for tradition has to be unearthed from the colonial past and its relevance examined : modernity and modernism have meaning only in relationship to tradition. The literary renaissance of the 19th century did not succeed in providing the answers for it belonged to the colonial period when the imposed value structures were heavily weighed against the native culture which was subordinated, and treated as inferior, and the cultural condition was, as Frantz Fanon puts it, one of being "mummi-

fied"<sup>4</sup>. During the first half of the century, the social and political conditions in India were, in some ways, the exact opposite of what was happening in the West. India did not have a share in any of the economic benefits of technological advancement, on the advantage of being free and thus did not share the West's disillusionment with technology or materialism, or share the West's fear of freedom.<sup>5</sup> The Indian intellectual also did not feel alienated, he was part of the mainstream.<sup>6</sup>

Turning to the West, it is clear that modernism grew out of a European internationalism, a perception of which is recorded by Matthew Arnold in his essay on Tolstoi and "the Modern Element in Literature".<sup>7</sup> The faint beginnings of modernism are there in the works of Ibsen and Shaw, developed by Strindberg and Pirandello, by Brecht in his anti-Aristotelian theatre, and Beckett in his absurd one. Yeats's and Synge's plays of the Irish Revival, Eliot's poetic drama, Camus and Sartre's existential questionings all belong to this movement. Several other names like Artaud and Wedekind come to one's mind. Varied as the movement is, the main issues underlying it can be summed up as follows :

(a) A questioning of the nature of reality which leads to a fragmentation of plot, of character, of time, and the displacement of the traditionally accepted conventions and ideas.

(b) A questioning of the role of the intellectual in his relations to his own self—and to society.

At the artistic level it signified a closer relationship between different art media and brought about a theatre of "mixed means."

Modernism upset the concept of mimetic art and set itself the task of redefining it. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) may be taken as its unofficial theoretical manifesto (and Trilling's essay "On the Teaching of Modern Literature", *Beyond Culture*, as its closing statement). Eliot in his essay sets out to define tradition, and while discouraging timid obedience or blind adherence to it, points out that "It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour."<sup>8</sup> The first step in this direction was the development of a historical sense, of the awareness of the simultaneity of the past and the present.

This kind of an awareness begins to develop in Hindi drama in the 40s during the freedom struggle, and during the war when the causes and the inevitable upheaval attached to them forced drama from its earlier narcissistic brooding to move towards the visual theatrical image and a sense

of the dramatic encounter. With Independence several supportive factors emerged : there was a resurgence of pride in native traditions ; Hindi had the official status of a national language ; later the Sangeet Natak Akademi was set up<sup>9</sup> and in 1959 the National School of Drama was established.

The channels of influences were also multiplied : they were no longer limited to educational influences and translations of plays but spread out to include related media, directorial influences and other regional language literatures/drama. There was a revival of the staging of Sanskrit plays in the 50s. One of the earliest writers who is a modernist is Bhuvneshwar Prasad (1910-50), whose earlier plays like *Shepma—Ek Vivahit Vidambna* (1933), *Pratibha ka Vivah* (1933), *Shaitan* (1934), and *Lottery* (1935) were clearly imitative of the Shavian twist and deglorification of accepted norms. He moved first towards symbolism in *Kathputlian* (1942) and finally towards absurdism in *Tambe ke Keede* (1946). As Vipin Kumar Agarwal, himself a neglected dramatist of the absurd tradition, points out in his preface to Bhuvneshwar's anthology *Caravan*. *Tambe ke Keede* precedes Genet's *The Maids* (1947), Ionesco's *Bald Prima Donna* (1950) and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952).

*Tambe ke Keede* is a play disjunctive in every sense : in plot, characterization, theme, language and even setting. The author's stage directions specify that it can be staged in a drawing room, but these directions seem to have an ironic purpose for the physical setting of a drawing room only highlights the grotesque elements : the play is meant for the confessional. It consists of incomplete vignettes of life, of fragmentary half-truths, counter-statements, riddles unanswered and unanswerable, of an assorted cast, of interrupted and disrupted conversations. Everything in the play is geared towards laying bare man's unconsious and shocking him into some kind of an awareness. These satirical episodes are strung together by the presence of a female announcer who uses a child's toy rattle to the call for order in the disorderly scene. The technique is primarily of a street performer and of the native *Bhana*<sup>10</sup>. This play which at first sight appears to be different from his earlier plays, on close analysis seems to be a logical development of his earlier experiments which question the nature of reality, of man-woman relationship, of the unpredictable in the human character, and the gap between the public and the private self.

Bhuvneshwar, however, did not find a ready success in the stage, and his early death deprived the dramatic scene of an unusual talent. From amongst his contemporaries Upendranath Ashk provides a perfect contrast

to him, with his sense of the well-made play. Ashk's one great service to Hindi drama is to have freed it from a life of neglect, his realistic studies of psycho-social tensions all have a strong sense of the dramatic and thus his plays, based upon an acute sense of observation,<sup>11</sup> have been successfully staged. Ashk, however, is not really a modern and he does not represent the modern consciousness. In a preface to a collection of one-act plays, *Mere Shresht Ekanki*, he rejects historical themes, failing to see any vitality in them, also failing to see that this could be one way of exploring one's traditional roots, of dissecting the past in order to not only acquire a historical sense but also an awareness of the past in the present. In Trilling's words writers who turn to old models of experiencing reality, do so "in order to escape from positivism and commonsense"<sup>12</sup>, and thus it becomes a way of transcending the mundane and approaching the archetypal. In western literature such a trend is obvious in the Irish literary revival, where the writers consciously turned to myths and local legend (as in the Cuchulain plays, see Yeats's *Death of Cuchulain* - 1889). Shaw's *St. Joan* (1923), Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* (1933) and *The Family Reunion* (1939), Brecht's *Galileo* (1938) and *St. Joan of the Stockyards* (1931), Anouilh's *Becket* and Camus's *Caligula* (1945) are all plays expressive of the need to understand and redefine tradition.<sup>13</sup> These plays focus in some way or the other on moral values, on personal courage and conflict, on the concept of heroism and the secularization of martyrdom. They present ways of exploring selfhood (and life and death).<sup>14</sup> They also offer a comment on society. A similar trend is dominant in the Hindi drama of the late 50s and in the 60s it is at its peak. Several of these plays are subversive in intention, others raise open-ended issues and explore and question the meaning of life. Dharamvir Bharati's *Andha Yug* (1955) refers back to the *Mahābhārata*, while Mohan Rakesh in his first two plays, *Aasadh ka Ek Din* (1958) and *Lahron ke Rajhans* (1963) explore human identity and relationships through the past, through characters from the pages of history. Laxmi Narayan Lal's *Narsing Katha* (1975) and Shankar Shesh's *Komal Gandhar* (1982) also have a historical background. Shesh's *Ek aur Dronacharya* (1983) and Lal's *Mr. Abhimanyu* (1983) make the past explore and express the present. Bhisham Sahni's *Kabira Khada Bazarmein* (1981)<sup>15</sup> belongs to the same kind. The use of history in those plays is critical and discriminating: it is not explanatory and the focus is on character, on the making and nature of men.



There are other plays also of this period : the historical trend is not the only one. Plays like Lal's *Abdulla Diwana*, which is a political play in the form of a murder trial, and Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhure* deserve attention. Significantly the dramatic form is adopted consciously with a view to performance, for as such it offers something additional.

Bharati's *Andha Yug* is a play with epic dimensions ; and though it begins the action from the last day of the battle of *Mahābhārata* and takes it up to the death of Krishna, it casts its net wide in terms of thematic explorations. For the focus is not on the battle : the story is also not told chronologically as is done in the performance of Ramlila and Krishnalila. Beginning from the 18th day, the play moves backwards through characters (this is in the form of the Greek chorus) and through the narrative thread of the story. This last—the narrative song which is used for scene-shifting—is a technique which Bharati has adopted from the folk-tradition<sup>16</sup> and the play itself when performed in an open theatre acquires those dimensions. The interest and the experiment, however, lie not in the narrative itself but in the complex motives which are responsible for the events : the jealousy, the intrigues, the envy, the self-accusation, the divided emotions ; also the conscious rebellion of certain characters against the roles which they are expected to perform like Sanjay who performs the role of the eyes of the blind King Dhritarashtra, and Yuyutsu who refuses to compromise his own principles and is a rebel in the Kaurav camp for he feels they are wrong. As a result of this, his homecoming is very different from that of a returning warrior. He is met by closed doors from the people and coldness and taunts even from his mother. From a heroic battle it moves to being an unheroic one, from a confrontation between right and wrong, it becomes one between two wrongs ; from the blind King's life it leads to a blind age : but there are moments of self-analysis, of self-knowledge, of light. The play is rich with layers of meaning, and with poetry, with mythic levels, but in all this it lies close to the folk tradition.

In choosing the *Mahābhārata*, Bharati returns to the base of not only Indian but most South Asian drama, and by using poetry and not prose he emphasizes this tradition. The narrative song, or the narrative voice is also, as already pointed out, a natural extension from the past. As Faubian Bowers has pointed out in *Theatre in the East* (New York : Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1956, p. 80), "Drama everywhere in Asia technically originated out of simple chantings of the holy books and recitals from epic poems."

Rakesh in his preface to *Aasadh ka Ek Din* viewed it as a step in the direction of an Indian theatre. But the play is structured fairly differently from *Andha Yug*, and as it focuses on the relationship between Kalidas and Mallika one begins to doubt the validity of this claim. Several critics are of the view that it is a very modern play, which no doubt it is. Still, I am not quite happy in dismissing this claim without a serious consideration. Where and how does this play move towards a concept of the Indian theatre? I think in character delineation, in the images and the poetry, in the relationship between character and plot. The action of the play is geared to this sense and revolves around the question: what kind of a man was Kalidas? It seems to be in the line of the kind of play Bhavabhūti wrote in the 7th century, especially *Uttararāmacarita* which set itself the task of questioning the basis of Rāma's public behaviour; it thus frees Rāma from the conventional public image, brings out the conflict in his character and emphasizes the atmosphere of the play. (Adya Rangacharya's "Manch par Uttarramcharit", *Natrang* Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1965, pp. 8-14, offers a very good analysis of the play and enables one to see how modernism in the Hindi play has returned to this concept.) In many ways the Indian theatre approaches Grotowski's idea of the poor theatre, and depends on the dramatic revelation, poetry and the hidden meanings of that poetry. It is difficult at first to respond to this Indian-ness, for several of these ideas have travelled back to us through the West. As Kapila Vatsayan in an article on "Sanskrit Drama and the Modern Theatre" (*Natrang*, pp. 5-7) remarked that the western theatre's modern form has been greatly influenced by the Asian theatre. (p. 7)

In *Aasadh ka Ek Din* the emotional relationship between Kalidas and Mallika is sacrificed to the need for recognition of Kalidas's poetic talent. Kalidas's departure to the state capital distances him from his roots; once when he passes through the town with his wife Priyung, he does not visit Mallika, but finally he does come back, when it is rumoured that he has renounced the world and is on his way to the Himalayas. His return is a dramatic moment of encounter not between Kalidas and Mallika, but between Kalidas and his former self. It is at this juncture that Vimal's role and its dramatic purpose becomes clear. Vimal has married Mallika — out of a love-hate relationship; Mallika has agreed, for with Kalidas's apparent indifference to her, she has lost the capacity to love herself. Suddenly the characters are transformed into archetypal figures: with Mallika becoming Ambika and her young daughter substituting her

former self. Their struggle and their incompleteness is a universal one as the past and the present meet.

A similar style and symbolism is evoked in *Lahron ke Rajhans* (begun in 1960, based upon a short story of Rakesh's, written as early as the late 40s, and completed after several revisions in 1963 and again revised in 1966-67) where the relationship between Nand and Sundri is taken up to focus on the complexity of human nature, on the conflict between the conscious and the subconscious, and the strength of individuality which persists in the face of despair and frustration, in the suffering and anguish which is a part of freedom. Rakesh's plays are modern in their concept of character which is no longer cohesive or organic or well integrated, but an awareness of the contradictory and complex urge, and desires. In the preface to *Lahron ke Rajhans*, Rakesh comments at length on his interpretation of Kalidas's character in *Aasadh ka Ek Din* and sees in him the source of regenerative forces (p. 4). He turns to another historical situation and historical characters because he feels that literature relates the past to the present. Sundri insists on inviting her friends on the day Yasodhara is to become a "Bhikshuni", and the result is that people do not turn up, it is almost a ritual enacted but the enactment does not come to life : instead its incompleteness raises several questions which have no answer. The second act takes us to another ritual : of Sundri engaged in the ceremony of dressing up, making up her face, and in this Nand assisting her. But this closed world is shattered by a knock on the door. Nand follows Buddha and has to submit the preliminary preparations for renouncing the world : but he does not submit to the final ceremony — instead he comes back home to Sundri. But a great deal has happened — Nand is no longer the man who has left home and Sundri is no longer the woman whom he had left (p. 112). There remains the problem of identity, there also remains the problem of communication and loneliness, and the intense awareness of this loneliness, of the incompleteness of human life.

This existential approach, this analysis of human incompleteness is carried forward in Rakesh's third play *Aadhe Adhure* which is different from the earlier two, in the sense that it has a contemporary setting, contemporary characters, and the language far from being poetic is sharp with anger, self-concern and even self-hatred. Rakesh more than any other dramatist in Hindi, can be said to represent modernism. And in this play he struck a cord in the middle class psyche pressurized by material needs and des-

troyed by its own inner incessant demands. This play which is about a middle class family and does not have the open structure of an epic play like *Andha Yug* would ordinarily be performed in a closed theatre, for it also does not have any apparent folk tradition as several of Vijay Tendulkar's plays have. But Om Shivpuri moved the play to the open theatre, and keeping the lights and scenic devices to the minimum, he did away even with the conventional make-up of the artistes, thus reducing at one level the distance between art and life, but at another throwing up grotesque shadows of life through characters and language too close to be recognized as familiar and resulting in surrealistic images.

Shankar Shesh in his *Komal Gandhar* (1982) also takes up a historical setting only to question the present, the complexity of human character, and the ethical ambiguities underlying human motives. In *Ek aur Dronacharya* (1983) there is a constant shifting between the past and the present, a juxtaposition between the two situations. There is here a use of fantasy in underlining the parallels between the two situations. History also becomes a means of stressing deterioration and change in the present as in Lal's *Mr. Abhimanyu*. But much more powerful than this is Lal's play *Narsing Katha* (1975) where the setting is placed purely in the past. The play derives its strength more from technique than from theme which no doubt is a universal one. From the point of view of technique it borrows several features from folk plays, the use of the "Bahroopiya", the disguises, the poems somewhat in the "Nautanki" style but not sung to music, the domination of the spectacle — all come alive during a performance.

There have also been formal attempts to revitalize the traditional "Nautanki" form in Hindi (refer Mudrarakshas's *Ala Afsar* (1979) based upon Gogol's *The Inspector General*) and these have had a varying degree of success on the Hindi stage. Most of these plays, however, belong to the agitprop theatre, to the committed theatre of social criticism. But this in itself is a wide generalization and likely to have many exceptions. The Panjabi opera is a parallel form choosing for itself historical and legendary material and emphasizing both its complexity and contemporaneity.

What is noticeable in the modernist phase is the interaction not only between India and the West, but between the various languages and literatures, and regional art forms of India itself, and the modern drama in Hindi is partly a product of this trans-Indian awareness. The role of translations from western languages, I think, has been over-emphasized for translators have not been very liberal in the choice of the plays translated ;

but yes, they did make available to the Indian writer the Shakespearean model of tragedy and the Greek play. But cultural interaction takes place at several levels : the urban civilization, related media, the continued and persistent interest of the West in Indian and Asian dramatic traditions ranging from Yeats's fascination with the Japanese "Noh", Artaud's response to the Balinese dance to the contemporary productions of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and more recently Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*. But no dramatic sense can be imposed or transplanted : there has to be a preparedness in the native soil and only then are growth and experiment possible. For this the Hindi dramatist turns again and again to an exploration of Sanskrit drama, no matter how distant it seems, and to the use of folk art in order to experiment anew. The continuity of this into the postmodernist phase is evidence enough of the native roots. Returning to Eliot's view of the writer in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" there is the awareness that change does not mean the abandonment of tradition but "a development which abandons nothing *en route* ..."

#### NOTES

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1 Hindi drama was almost non-existent till the mid-19th century. Agha Hasan Amanat's *Inder Sabha* (1856) set the stage for various imitations to follow. The play was in the operatic style. Another well-known figure of this period is Bharatendu Harishchandra who wrote about 17 plays, 7 of them translations, mainly of Shakespeare's plays. Bharatendu's original plays were mainly historical, with a tendency to glorify the past. This theatre would necessarily have to be a rhetorical one. Also contemporary in time was what was known as the Parsi theatre, a name given to the group of various dramatic companies owned or organized by Parsis and staging plays in Gujarati, English, Urdu and Hindustani. They often employed writers who wrote or translated for them. This can be said to have developed into the Hindi film which like the Parsi theatre uses song and dance as elements equal with the story. Several well-known film artistes had their initial training in the Parsi theatre. Prithvi Theatres which appeared on the national scene in 1944 continued this tradition in great measure, the main difference being the acknowledged didactic element in the plays of the Prithvi Theatres. The plays were dominated by rhetoric and characters and though it was a pioneering effort, its contribution was limited. Bharatendu Harishchandra's historical plays led to a continuation of this tradition, notable amongst these is Jai Sankar Prasad whose historical plays like *Chandragupta* and *Skandgupta* have fed the imagination of later writers. Prasad, however, was not a very successful dramatist on the stage though his plays have great literary merit in terms of poetry and as an attempt in producing a model for tragedy.

- 2 Kapila Vatsayan, "Prayag ki Kuchh Maulik Samasyaen", *Natrang*, Vol. 1, No. 1. (Jan. 1965), p. 5.
- 3 Sombhu Mitra, "Bhartiya Rangmanch ka Anveshan", *Natrang*, Vol. 1. No. 4. (1965), p. 9.
- 4 Refer Frantz Fanon, *Towards the African Revolution* (1964), trans. Haakon (New York : Chevalier, Monthly Review Press, 1967), p. 34 : "The setting up of the colonial system does not itself bring about the death of a native culture. Historic observation reveals, on the contrary, that the aim sought is rather a continued agony than a total disappearance of the pre-existing culture, once living and open to the future, becomes closed, fixed in the colonial status, caught in the yoke of oppression. Both present and mummified, it testifies against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal. The cultural mummification leads to a mummification of individual thinking ... Thus we witness the setting up of archaic inert institutions, functioning under the oppressor's supervision and patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions...."
- 5 Erich Fromm in his *Escape from Freedom* (1956) attempts an explanation of the totalitarian domination of Europe in the 30s. In his view the western man, afraid of the responsibility of being free, voted for father figures and moved towards totalitarianism. Freedom was too heavy a burden. In this connection Orwell's comment about the human condition irrelevant, "... when one's belly is empty, one's only problem is an empty belly. It is when we have got away from the drudgery and exploitation that we shall really start wondering about man's destiny and the reason for his existence." (*Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, 4 Vols.) ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, (London : Seeker & Warburg, 1968) III, 103)
- 6 Ben Knights, *The Idea of the Clerisy in the Nineteenth Century* (C.U.P., 1978), examines the role of the intellectuals in the 19th century which was within the mainstream : this role changed towards the end of the 19th century with the onset of modernism—in any case the two are obviously related to each other. See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, in his discussion of D.H. Lawrence and George Orwell. Also see Huszar's anthology *The Intellectual : A Controversial Portrait* (Illinois : The Free Press, 1960).
- 7 Matthew Arnold, "Count Leo Tolstoi", *Essays in Criticism*, second series (London : Macmillan, 1941).
- 8 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", *English Critical Texts*, ed. Enright & De Chickera (O.U.P., 1962), p. 294.
- 9 Sangeet Natak Akademi (1954). Gan Natya Sangh in the late 40s revived folk drama. (See Habib Tanveer's article in *Natrang*, Vol. 1. No. 1. p. 11.)
- 10 "Bhana" is a traditional form of a one-character, one-act play, the main aim of which is to expose the weaknesses of human characters. Often this exposure takes place through dialogue with an imaginary being or with one's own self. For Bhuvneshwar's plays see *Bhuvneshwar ke Amar Ekanki : Caravan tatha anya Ekanki* (Allahabad : Lok Bharati Prakashan, 1972). Vipin Kumar Agarwal comments in detail on *Tambe ke Keede* (XI-XX).
- 11 In the preface to *Mere Shresth Ekanki*, "Do Sanchi, Do Khari", Ashk describes how through a period at home he observed life around him, including the ritualistic mourning of the dead known as "Siyappa" (Delhi : National Publishing House, n.d.). See pp. 7-12

12 Trilling, "On the Teaching of Modern Literature", *Beyond Culture*, p. 17.

13 There are several other plays like Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* (1960), Osborne's *Luther* (1961), Miller's *The Crucible* (1963). For a detailed study of the heroic and antiheroic questioning see Ruby Cohn's *Currents in Contemporary Drama* (Bloomington ; Indiana University Press, 1969), pp. 85-153.

14 See Trilling's "Freud : Within & Beyond Culture", *Beyond Culture*, p. 104 ; & my article, 'Saints and Martyrs : Religious & Secular Views', *Litteret*, Vol. 3. No. 1 (June 1977), pp. 25-33. Also see Artaud "Third Letter", *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York : Grove Press, 1958), p. 116, "The true purpose of the theatre is to create Myths, to express life in its immense, universal aspect...."

15 There are several other plays which seek to reinterpret history but which I am not discussing here.

16 *Andha Yug* (Allahabad : Kitab Mahal, 1984), p. 6.

### *1. The Joint Congress of Comparative Literature*

On 2-4 January 1987 Jamia Millia Islamia hosted on its campus in New Delhi a joint congress of comparative literature under the auspices of the Comparative Indian Literature Association and the Indian National Comparative Literature Association. It was the second national meeting of the CILA and the third INCLA biennial. The theme of this joint congress was "Modernity in Indian Literature" with emphasis on genres, themes and movements, impact and response, emerging literatures, translation and women. There was also a supplementary though professional thrust on comparative literature syllabi and teaching. Delegates came from all over India, some 150 or so and about 60 papers were presented. And it was in the absolute fitness of things that one of the prime writers of India today, the Jnanpith award winner Shri Umashankar Joshi should inaugurate the congress. What he said was corroborated by the chief guest, Professor Sarup Singh, a former vice-chancellor of Delhi University. And in tune with their words as well as with the general tone of the participation, came the words of valediction at the end, spoken by the eminent Professor Nagendra. The joint congress was indeed a rare event.

### *2. A National Seminar that Preceded*

That was in early January. But two months ago, as if as a precursor, a national seminar had been held at the Modern Indian Languages Department of Aligarh Muslim University on Comparative Indian Literature, on 5-8 November 1986. The participation was fairly wide. Part of the emphasis was on CIL as an academic discipline including model syllabi and teaching materials. But there was also an emphasis on the common features of Indian literature as well as on translation. The seminar ended up by adopting a resolution as to the immediate acceptance of comparative literature as a full-fledged discipline at a few more universities.

### *3. And a Symposium that Followed*

Aligarh is a premier university. It was one thing to organize a national seminar at Aligarh but quite another to convene a symposium at Willingdon College at Sangli in Maharashtra. But the latter, held on 13-15 February 1987, was no less intense. Its primary concern was how to work out the right scholarly approach to Marathi 'romantic' poetry alongside the English, whether the parameters were independent enough and the literary history self-sufficient or whether the question was in the first place of in-



fluence/impact or at least of inter-facing. The Marathi critics and scholars – English teachers all – that gave the symposium its intensity, thrashed up the question with an exemplary fervour.

#### 4. *Sambalpur to Show the Way*

But the general question of how the English syllabus in India, for reasons of relevance and practical pedagogy, should in part go comparative, had been taken up at a national symposium at Sambalpur University on 27-29 January. Apart from some twelve participants from the other universities, a good many came from the various colleges under Sambalpur, no less exemplary than their colleagues at Sangli in their commitment and fervour. Whether the consensus they arrived at by way of syllabus restructuring is going to be acceptable to the English departments all over the country, is another question ; what mattered was the feeling of urgency. We hope that the English Curriculum Committee has taken cognizance of this urgency, no matter what consensus they may have in the meantime arrived at.

#### 5. *The Jadavpur Seminars in March*

There were two international seminars at Jadavpur this March, the first in the Comparative Literature Department on "Cultural Relativism and Literary Value" on 19-21, and the second in the English Department on "Literature, Society and Ideology in the Victorian Era" on 28-31. Professor Douwe Fokkema of the University of Utrecht and President, International Comparative Literature Association, participated in the former. Its proceedings are expected to be out in the next number of *JJCL*. We hope the proceedings of the English seminar too will come out in a future issue of *Essays and Studies*.

#### 6. *At JNU*

The Centre of Linguistics and English of Jawaharlal Nehru University also did a broad seminar at about the same time, 31 March-2 April, on "Literature and History : The African Experience". One of the Delhi publishers is bringing out its proceedings.

#### 7. *At the Indian Institute of Advanced Study*

Perhaps the most constructive comparative literature seminar of the year was held at the IAS, Shimla on 22-26 June. Its thrust was fairly general, "Comparative Literature : Theory and Practice". Participants came from

all over India and their papers covered a good number of areas – schools of comparative literature, literary theory, literary interactions, themes and genres, literary relations, reception-survival and influence-impact, literary history, and finally, the pedagogy of Comparative Indian Literature. The papers were both theoretical explorations and close case-studies. We are happy that the IAS is going to bring out the proceedings of this seminar in book form.

#### 8. *Contributors to this Number*

Of the 13 papers published here 12 were presented at a seminar at Jadavpur in September 1985 on “Indian-Western Literary Relations”. As it is clear from the papers, the seminar had a double thrust – on the changes that came about in the 19th century and on the emergence of ‘modernism’. Papers were followed by formal comments and discussion which could not be included here for want of space. The only paper from Jadavpur was Swapan Majumdar’s. Meenakshi Mukherjee was then at the University of Hyderabad and is now at the Centre of Linguistics and English, JNU. Ayyappa Paniker is still at his old place, the Institute of English at Kerala University. Two years ago he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi prize for Malayalam. Sitanshu Yashaschandra is an eminent Gujarati poet and teaches Gujarati at M.S. University, Baroda. Another eminent writer, a Marathi novelist, Bhalchandra Nemade was at Marathwada University until recently. Now he is at Goa University building up a new department of English. Biyot Kesh Tripathy is an old friend of the department and is the architect of the Berhampur English department. Shantinath K. Desai is as much a writer as an academic – address Shivaji University, Kolhapur. Another old friend of the department, Bholabhai Patel is from the School of Languages, Gujarat University. Tejwant Singh Gill teaches English and holds the Subramania Bharati Chair of Comparative Literature at Guru Nanak Dev University. C. Subbarao has built up the department of English and Comparative Literature at Sri Krishnadevaraya University but has now moved to Hyderabad. Jaidev has already appeared in our pages. He teaches English at Himachal Pradesh University. Jasbir Jain is a senior teacher of English at the University of Rajasthan.

The paper that stands as an exception to this number is Robert Griffin’s. Professor Griffin is from the Department of Literatures and Languages, University of California, Riverside.

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